

THE FAIRY CHASER



BY
MARY A. BYRNE



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A Pansy Girl.

THE FAIRY CHASER

By MARY AGNES BYRNE

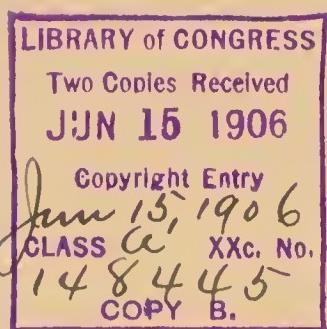
Author of "The Little Woman in the Spout,"
"Roy and Rosyrock," "Little Dame Trot," etc.

Illustrated by ANNA B. CRAIG



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THE FAIRY CHASER

CHAPTER I

Two Chums

NOW I shall raise fine vegetables," said Lionel, "and when I grow up, instead of perching all day on a high stool with my face puckered and my hands inked over, I'll have a big garden and sell to the market men and get a pile of dough!"

"And I'll distinguish myself, too, you bet, only I'll raise flowers to sell. Ma wants me to be a bookkeeper. Nice time I'd have sitting doubled in two! In trying to balance the ledgers I'd get my mind unbalanced!" cried Tom disgustedly.

Lionel paused in his task of weeding out unwelcomed roots and turned an animated countenance up to Tom who leaned against the zigzag fence across which they exchanged experiences, made suggestions, and rejoiced or condoled with one another according to the success or failure of plans.

"The folks think we'll get tired and let them lead us in the paths they think we should go," he observed, "as if we couldn't do our own thinkin' when we have to do our own work. Now, I'd make a mess of clerkin' but I'll be a No. 1 gardener!"

"Be! Why we *are*—just look at all the sturdy weeds an' things that sprout up under our care! But don't get discouraged, Li, me boy! Why, say, if you don't look like that picture—Raphael's cherubs—I think it is—, done up in pants and freckles!"

Lionel, kneeling bare-legged on the ground with his eyes turned upward in Tom's direction, gave a merry chuckle.

"Do the angels sweat I wonder?" he queried, mopping his glowing face with the back of his hand. "And you look like the other fellow! '*Did* you ever *see* the devil with—'"

"Why, I'm 'The Man with the Hoe,'—" returned Tom, striking a pose.

"Without the hose you mean," corrected Lionel, gazing at Tom's bare knees. "To work—to work! Ease is demoralizing to one of your tired temperament or thermometer or whatever you call it." They resumed their interrupted occupation.

The two lads, Tom Desmond and Lionel Jackson lived in a country town in cottages that stood like amiable twins side by side but not connected, the one dressed in light brown, the other in white, each in summer broidered over with climbing plants; in

front of each a green-trimmed hood of a porch projected out to a smooth lawn where giant locust trees kept guard on both sides of the gate. A broad path led around the right side of both houses to the back porch and thence through the grape arbors, beyond which it was bordered by thickly growing bushes of currants and gooseberries which separated it from the vegetable beds.

At the upper end of the gardens the boys' special property was situated, the beloved plots which in a way typified their freedom, as boys, to make choice of their life work, and their independence as men, to do the work for which they were fitted, the work they liked best.

Early in March a newspaper which made its weekly appearance at the Desmonds' had been pounced on by Tom, who devoured it along with a pocketful of red-cheeked apples as he stretched himself comfortably on the sitting room lounge. It contained an article which had suggested the idea of having these gardens—a thought which struck Tom pleasantly and forcibly and induced him to quit the cheery warmth of the house for the frost-bitten outside path which led to the Jacksons'.

Lionel came out and during a long walk the matter was discussed. It appealed to them perhaps the more because it was work so opposite to that which their mothers had mapped out for them. Presenting it at first as a mere diversion, ready permission was

obtained from their parents and preparations were at once made for the undertaking.

Now, anyone not acquainted with the boys would think that a lad with the romantic name of Lionel would have preferred to raise flowers and that vegetables should be Tom's specialty, but seeing them, Lionel with his broad, thickly-freckled face and his wide-awake, azure eyes and Tom's somewhat thin face, dark complexion and great, dreamy orbs, sometimes brown, sometimes gray, changing with their owner's moods, even a stranger could easily guess the choice each would make.

The tastes of both were similar to the degree of loving out-door life. What delightful times they had together, fishing, exploring the hills and woods all the countryside around, picking berries, gathering nuts and in winter taking part in all the country sports! They attended school regularly for the six months' term each year but they did not love to go. Lionel cared not at all for books and studied only what he could not avoid. Tom was fond of reading, acquired knowledge with facility, but, like Lionel, he considered the hours spent in the schoolroom wasted time. However, as the term was for the most part in winter weather, they managed to put in the time, urged on by insisting elders. Later in life they confessed that it had done them a world of good and that if they had been wiser they would have profited more.

In summer they went shoeless with trousers so carefully patched and re-patched that they would have resembled crazy quilts if the lads' mothers had not taken the trouble to procure cloth for the mending of a shade similar to the original. When called upon to admire articles of fancy work or wonderful "spreads" exhibited by other women whose sons were less restless, no doubt the ladies sighed to think of what they, too, might have accomplished were it not for those garments always turning up in the "repair shop"—as the boys dubbed the work-baskets—except at the times when, to insure freer movements, they were worn turned up at their owners' knees. For the same reason and not because they were buttonless their shirts were worn open at the throat. Battered straw hats, generally clapped on the back of their heads, accounted for Lionel's freckles and Tom's deepened tan.

Seeing them thus you would doubtless predict that to turn those two liberty-loving spirits to clerical pursuits would prove disastrous all around.

When Lionel's maternal parent spoke of his studying law and Tom's declared that bookkeeping was "just the thing" for her boy, the lads listened and made no audible comment, then seeking one another, they "kicked" in every sense of the word, protesting against so direful a fate with all the eloquence at their command.

When the recent passing of a certain date had given Tom the right to say proudly, "I am twelve years old to-day," Lionel had chased him through the garden and down the road until he had administered the dozen blows due—and being of a generous nature made it a baker's dozen—while Tom, panting, promised to get even in a few weeks' time. Aunt Julia bought him a present of a tooth brush, regarding which his mother gave him strict orders to use daily, and "Tootsy Wootsy," his two-year-old sister, presented him with eighteen kisses, one and a half for each year, and his father bestowed some good advice in relation to the doing of the chores. Walter Jackson, three years his junior, wearied of Tom's superior airs, declared that "It was no pumpkins to be twelve years old. Lots of people had been that before and others would be it ere long," or something to that effect, in which sweeping denunciation he included his brother Lionel who was sometimes inclined to "lord" it over him. Well, it was shortly after this memorable day that Tom, hearing his mother refer to his future stool-bound career, had the temerity to speak out, saying:

"Then you want me to grow like old Dad Dowie. He's been bookkeeping at the grocery for thirty years. His eyes are like tired ciphers and the other figures are spread all over his face. His back is bent and he looks as if he's grown to the chair. I used to think it was a part of him until I watched one day and

saw him tumbling off. His salary has been reduced each year for the last five simply because, although he is better acquainted with the work and knows all about the business and keeps the custom, he is growing old!"

How many times had he and Lionel repeated these rebellious ideas to each other but this was Mrs. Desmond's first experience as their auditor.

"Why, Tom, you to grow to be like old Mr. Dowie, the idea!" she cried, laughing heartily. For her expectations were that her boy should have a beautifully-fitted office in a grand building and sit idly all day overseeing the workers and in a few years being admitted to partnership in a wealthy firm which had the honor of his services, then return to his native town, a man of might and influence.

"Well, ma, what else! I'm sure I'd have no chance in a big city where hundreds of boys are seeking work so I'd have to start in at Teller's for two dollars a week; at the end of half a century I'd get paid ten dollars and then when I'd worn my life out in hateful bondage they'd *cut down my salary!*"

He uttered the concluding words as might a tragedian in the most dramatic part of the play, then, as an afterthought he gave voice to what was really the most important article in his declaration of independence —

"No, ma, I don't want to hold down a high stool all my life and *I won't do it if I can help it!*"

He grabbed his hat and ran away, not waiting to note the result of his first public blow, or speech, for liberty.

If in the past he had ever murmured a word of protest to his mother in reference to her cherished plan she might have been prepared for this. As it was she was very much surprised. She told her husband that evening of her encounter with Tom. He treated the matter lightly.

"But bookkeeping is so easy and so—so genteel," urged the lady.

"Genteel, Myra, I hate the word! I don't want Tom to grow into one of those mincing fools who are afear'd to speak or smile for fear the onlooker w'd think he didn't b'long to his own 'set' while all the time you couldn't mistake the 'set' he b'longed to, not if he'd laugh the top of his head off until you could see the empty space beneath!"

"Law sakes, Hiram! Now, if Tom took to oratin,' I'd be at no loss to see where he *took that*, I'm sure he doesn't take his dislike of respectable work from *my* side of the house!"

"I guess he got his *ambition* from mine! But we will not force him in the matter! Let him argue it out, and when he's old enough, make a choice for himself, and we can only do our best in helping him to carry it out."

"He and Lionel Jackson are always mussing in the garden of late," observed his wife.

"Yes, Tom intends to try floriculture and Lionel to raise vegetables. Let us watch the outcome."

"But to be always grubbing in the earth and depending on crops and weather and such things!"

"They will at least live in the free air and support themselves and perhaps astonish us all yet!"

"Well, Tom is still young, and if he keeps on hating the idea of clerical work, why, I'll not be the one to force him to it," Mrs. Desmond concluded with a sigh as she saw her dream of Tom in the character of a man of wealth and influence fading away.

Lionel, encouraged by Tom's example, also made his declaration of war, and his parents having talked the matter over with Tom's, decided not to press him for the present.

The boys felt that the result of their gardening experiment would determine to a certain extent the wisdom of their choice; they resolved accordingly to leave nothing undone to make it successful. They had their regular work — helping in the family garden as they called it now, while the smaller ones were referred to as Tom's and Lionel's — and daily chores to do; consequently their small plots received attention only during hours taken from play, but it proved a source of much pleasure. They dug and hoed and raked and planted

seeds and listened eagerly to directions given by more experienced gardeners, which they tried faithfully to carry out, and when Tom's sweet peas and Lionel's lettuce were discovered one morning to have raised their pale green shoots from the ground, there was joy in two young hearts. Everybody congratulated them, even Tootsy Wootsy showed her appreciation by reaching chubby, anxious hands to gather the "pitty pittys," but Tom stood guard over his treasures.

With much thought were the tiny beds planned and laid out in oblongs and squares, Tom's with a star and his friend's with a circle in the center, and when the flowers and vegetables began to grow more vigorously the saucy weeds which dared to flaunt up between were ruthlessly slaughtered root and flower—well, not exactly the latter, seeing they were expelled long ere that process could have taken place.

"Just look at them, me boy! Ain't they fine?" cried Lionel one day, while he sat upon the dividing fence glancing alternately at the little gardens.

"Yes," returned Tom, rising from his kneeling posture and wiping his heated brow. "They are models of the large ones we will have in the sweet bye and bye."

"Buy and sell," corrected Lionel.

They certainly had reason for this hearty admiration. June had come; hyacinths and tulips were in bloom; the sweet peas had reached

up, waving red, white, and blue blossoms above their props; honeysuckles scented the air; there was a profusion of larkspur, lady-slippers — those old fashioned favorites,— and a narrow band of portulacca in a shaded corner.

On the opposite side of the fence peas and beans were seen, fat pods hanging along the tall poles amid their green leaves, onions, radishes and other small vegetables grew valiantly, besides lettuce and salads which had been used on the table and pronounced of a superior quality.

Of course it had cost much work fighting weeds and destructive insects, watering, manuring, pruning and training, but the result was even beyond their expectations; therefore on this occasion there was ample cause for pride.

After a while Tom remarked suddenly: "I've been cogitating." Lionel gave an exaggerated start.

"Not possible!"

"How would it do for us to have an old-fashioned rocky mountain like old Mrs. Gale's? We could build half on this side and half on yours, with the fence hid by moss and things."

"It strikes me all right. Tommy, you're a born gen-i-us!" cried his companion, giving the genius such a whack on the back that they both tumbled off the fence alighting, fortunately, just below those precious gardens.

The next morning work was commenced on the new undertaking. Walter, who was generally excluded from their schemes, was generously allowed to help on this one by carrying stones from the roads and neighboring fields, and even from the bed of Dunlap's creek, not far away, which they piled in artistic disorder.

Lionel declared they would put their namesakes, the real Rockies, to shame and make them hide their heads neath their "night caps" of snow.

"I don't see why you call them Rockies when not one stone was taken from the Rocky Mountains," said Walter.

"We might christen 'em the 'Chestnut Ridge,' 'cause we've used up so many old stones that have been lying in the road for years," suggested Lionel.

"Or better still the *Blue* Ridge — my little toe is black and blue from where that pesky stone fell on it," cried Tom, surveying the bruised member.

"And my fingers are all scratched in *ridges* from toting 'em," added Walter holding up his much-abused hands, the while prepared for flight should his more brilliant metaphor arouse the jealousy of the larger lads.

In the course of a few days the mountain stood almost as solid as the everlasting hills which surrounded the town. A neat imitation railway track with a white sanded wagon-road beside encircled it,

curving around immense "boulders" and over deep "cañons," and to complete the illusion, a pretty station which resembled a Gothic summer house was perched near the summit.

"All it needs now is ferns and things. We'll go over to Krell's fields to-morrow and get some," declared Tom.

Thus it was arranged, but the morrow found Lionel with a raging toothache. He was obliged to stay indoors, holding a bag of salt to his cheek. When Walter hinted that his freshness needed the salt badly, Lionel gave chase to give him a blow of the bag but the agile youngster eluded him.

"Well, I'll go and hunt a few things so we can work on the Blue Ridge to-morrow," said Tom, and he set off alone.

The day was a beautiful one in July. The sun's rays were cooled by a gently blowing breeze for which the flowers and grass and trees gave thankful bows of recognition. Overhead the sky was so dazzlingly blue and white that it made Tom's eyes blind to glance at it.

He knew just where to find the plants he sought, along a narrow run of water that crept singing down the hillside, enriching the soil all around until the brightest mosses and the plumiest ferns came to adorn its hospitable banks.

Before reaching there, it was necessary to pass a great oak tree which grew on a grassy plateau between the road and the creek whose

shallow bed it overhung. Tom could not resist the inclination to loiter beneath its spreading shade. He knew he had plenty of time for other affairs, so down he sat at the foot of the tree with his back against it, his hat thrown to one side and his legs stretched comfortably out. While sitting there he thought of his garden, his flowers that promised so well and of the finer ones he expected to raise in the future for the market. Perhaps some day — some day — he should have a beautiful rose that would take the prize at the floral exhibition and be known as the — no, he could not call it the Tom Rose, that might make people laugh — he would call it after Tootsy Wootsy, under her proper name, the Nora Desmond, which was pretty, but not any prettier than its namesake, thought that young lady's brother.

Presently he gathered himself up preparatory to arising, deciding to let dreams go and attend to no less beautiful realities, — the green things straight from the hands of the Almighty, growing uncared for by all except Him. Tom yawned lazily and reached for his hat, and then, if it had been a cold winter day you might have said the yawn froze in his mouth, leaving it wide open to match his eyes which remained fixed on a certain spot where his glance had fallen, for there he saw the most wonderful thing standing not an arm's length away!

CHAPTER II

THE FAIRY FLOWER

NOW what do you think it was? A flower, and such a flower! He had never before seen anything so exquisitely lovely! It stood up from a clump of the softest-tinted green leaves; it was shaped somewhat like a great lily-of-the-valley, the stem being perhaps six inches tall. The leaves were of changeable green, shaped like the lily-leaf, and the blossoms, just the size of a tea-cup, also varied in color. One moment it was pink, which deepened to a royal purple, then a pale cream shading to white, and again it glowed a brilliant crimson, while encircling all was a pear-shaped aureole, bright and transparent like the pale golden light often seen after a shower.

Tom was so amazed that he remained motionless for a time. He sniffed in the delicate perfume that sweetly scented the air. His busy brain was perplexed with questions.

What was it? How came it there? He had not seen it on his arrival, in fact his steps must have led him right over where it stood. At last he found breath.

"Jupiter!" he cried. He rubbed his eyes and looked again, expecting it to have disappeared for he was afraid he had been dreaming; but no — there it still remained to delight his eyes.

His heart beat more quickly.

"I'll take it home and plant it or some animal may tramp it down here," he thought as he watched it changing from a waxen, pearly tint to a delicate blue, deepening from that to violet and then to vivid red.

He moved his hand toward the shining wonder. When he touched the golden light which enveloped it like a gauzy veil, he experienced a thrill of joy that almost instantly gave place to dismay, for when he grasped for the treasure he felt nothing in his hand — for lo, the flower had vanished at his touch! He looked up into the clear, sunny atmosphere, thinking perhaps it had taken wings and flown, but it was not there; he examined the spot where it had been; nothing but the short green grass, no vestige of a bulb of any kind was found!

"It must have been a fairy flower," said Tom at last, ruefully. He generally expressed disbelief in fairies but he could account for this marvelous phenomenon in no other way.

After watching vainly for its return, he picked up his hat and started for the little brook where the ferns and mosses grew, but on reaching there he gathered them mechanically as a task, not as the

labor of love he would have found it earlier, his mind being now occupied with another matter.

He carried an armful of the wild growing things home, however, and finding that Lionel was rid of the toothache — along with the tooth which was lying quietly at the dentist's — they proceeded to the work of making beautiful the rockery, planted different kinds of ferns at the base and covered the bleak sides with velvet moss. They also swung a little bridge across a deep opening which Walter called Chasm Dangerous.

All the time working side by side with his dearest chum, Tom said not a word regarding the strange sight he had seen, although his thoughts were with it constantly. As the days went by Tom's interest in his garden diminished. What were those peas and carnations and the faithful four-o'clocks compared with that brilliant flower under the oak tree? If he could secure that he would have something worth "fussing" over, he mused. As it was, Lionel tended, watered and weeded his garden while Tom sat brooding beside his.

"Where the treasure is, there is the heart also."

Tom longed so ardently to recline again beneath the oak tree, to again behold the fairy flower! But he wished to go alone, not being as yet ready to divulge the great secret. In this, a small matter, which yet proved a serious obstacle, confronted him — it seemed

impossible to elude Lionel. They were in the habit of seeking out each other, of spending the whole day together happily. It had hitherto been a thing understood that where one went the other followed like a faithful shadow. Now Tom sighed for freedom; he chafed against the constant presence of his friend. On several occasions he tried to steal away, but Lionel's sharp eyes were sure to detect him, Lionel's piercing whistle would hail him and Lionel's sturdy legs would soon be trotting along beside Tom's suddenly loitering ones.

In those days Tom heartily sympathized with Sindbad, the sailor, while poor Lionel stuck manfully to him, never dreaming that Tom was muttering maledictions and calling him a regular old man of the sea.

But at last there came a time when Lionel hurried into the Desmond's after breakfast one morning to announce that he was going away with his father to spend the day at an aunt's in the neighboring town. He was glowing with happy anticipation; the only thing that detracted from his joy was the thought of Tom's loss of company. He knew that Tom would miss him sadly.

Tom faced the situation with seeming fortitude, while trying to conceal his gratification.

He no sooner saw his "old man" out of sight than he made hasty preparations, did up the chores with an unusual animation,

gave Tootsy Wootsy a hasty kiss and started away, fishing-rod in hand as an apparent excuse for his trip. He thanked fate that the opportune arrival of a gossip-loving neighbor kept his mother and Aunt Julia safely in the sitting room whose windows looked in an opposite direction.

His feet flew along the weed-grown path, on, on to the welcome shade of the oak! Down he sat as before and gazed at the spot where the flower had sprung, but alas, nothing was seen, nothing but the familiar grasses and the tiny wild plants.

The boy, disappointed, closed his eyes; he strove to evoke the mood of that other day,—a careless state of well being—but his eagerness, his impatience were foes to the consummation of his wish.

He opened his eyes at intervals; nothing met his gaze but the glare of the sun beyond the trees' far reaching branches, the deserted road, the hills with sparse vegetation, and in his vicinity the grass, nothing but the grass, his impatient moving bare toes and his own belongings—his hat and fishing rod close by. At times he imagined he detected the faint aroma which had emanated from the fairy flower; he stood up and searched around but all in vain.

After a repetition of disappointments, feeling that it was useless to remain longer and fearing that a more protracted absence from home would excite comment, he turned his back on the oak.

Reaching home he did the chores, then taking the sprinkling-

can, filled it at the cistern and watered his flowers listlessly, half disgustedly comparing them with the image in his mind. He felt sure that no matter how hard he would work over them, no matter with what care they were tended, none of them would ever equal that fairy flower!

"What's wrong, Tom?" inquired Lionel one day when he found his chum sitting gazing into space, unmindful of the weeds growing up among his treasures.

"What's the matter? Why, nothin'!" was the sharp reply.

He immediately set to work with a great show of alacrity. Lionel shook his tow head. Presently he peeped in through the fence. There sat Tom idle again. This happened so often as time went by that the decay of Tom's garden and the continued flourishing of Lionel's kept pace.

On another occasion, shortly after his disappointing trip, Tom wended his way again to the oak tree. He had found no difficulty in getting away from Lionel, the latter having at last perceived his friend's dislike of his company.

"Guess I c'n get along without him as well as he c'n without me," thought the forsaken one, half sadly, half defiantly, digging around his roots, while Tom hurried blithely away, hoping that this time he would be fortunate enough to obtain a glimpse of the provoking flower.

It was early in the morning when the dew lay like shimmering frost on the grass and flowers. While Tom half reclined beneath the oak, admiring the long blades gemmed with crystal drops that slowly melted in the gentle rays of the dawn, the Fairy Flower suddenly appeared before him! Whether it had sprouted up from the earth, or had flown down from the sky, he could not tell, but there it was, its green leaves glistening as if the dew had touched them also!

This time the flower was of softest rose color that gradually deepened to a cherry-red which faded to buff and then to a grayish-green until finally it stood a silver calyx with slender orange stamens tipped with crimson all enveloped in that mysterious veil of transparent gold. With its changing colors the scent varied; the darker hues giving out a rich, intoxicating odor and the pale tints a more delicate perfume. The boy held his breath while gazing upon the strange flower. It was even more beautiful than he had thought it at first—lovelier than his memory had painted it! Its perfection grew on one.

If only—he could—!

He gave a sudden movement and grasped—the air! The flower was gone!

Tom returned home with a heavy heart. It irritated him to see Lionel working so contentedly over those common vegetables.

All at once his friend's good points, his unvarying humor — except under toothache attacks — became causes for offense.

Lionel, for his part was puzzled what to think of the moody, discontented spirit which had taken hold of Tom.

One day, despite former rebuffs, he inquired sympathetically, "Tom, what's wrong?"

This time Tom was not so grumpy.

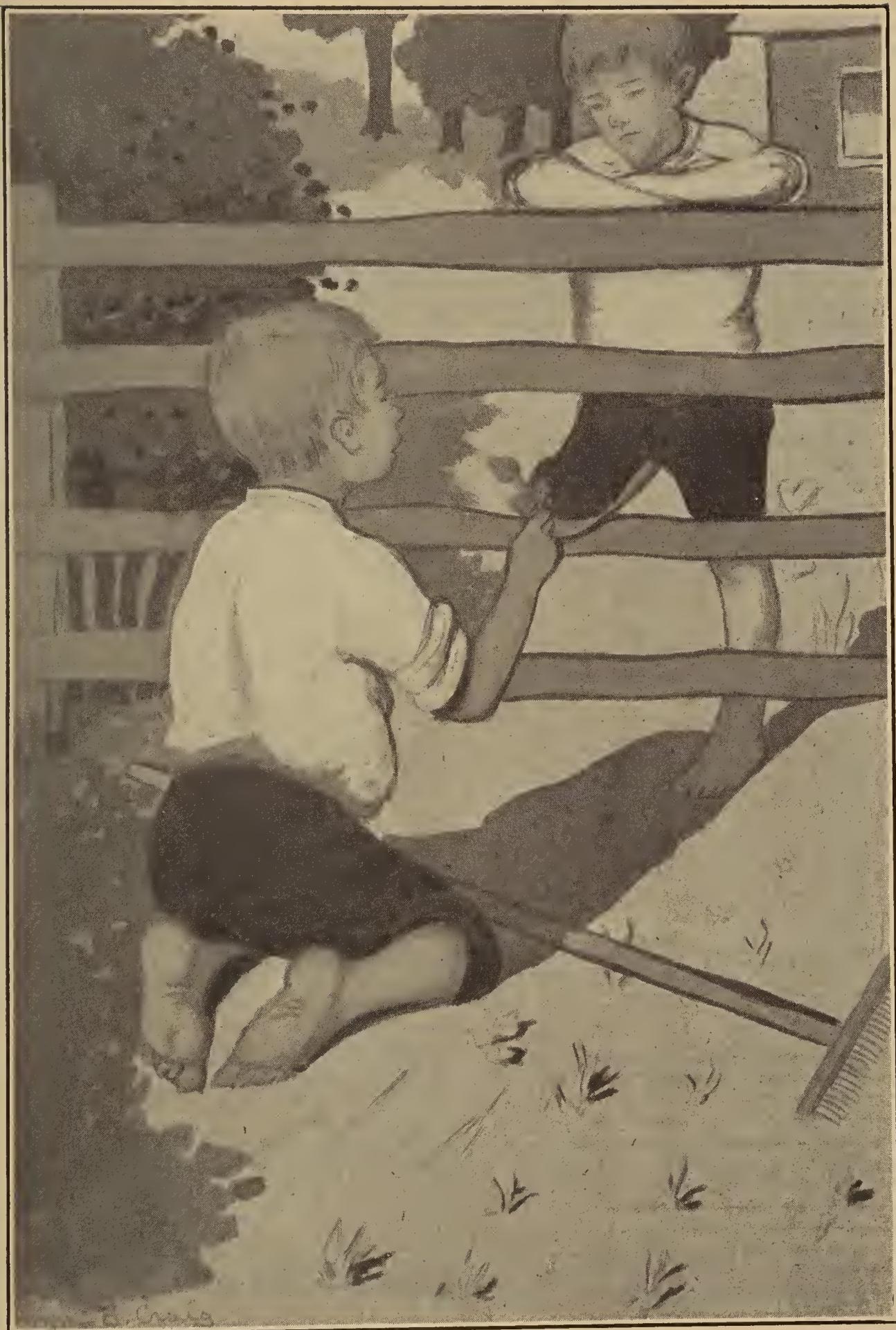
"Do you remember hearing me say long ago, Li, that balancing ledgers would unbalance my brain? Well, this flower business has unbalanced me, that's all."

Whereupon he opened his heart and while Lionel stood in open-mouthed wonder, Tom commenced the confidence that had often before sought utterance and with ready eloquence related his strange experience with the fairy flower.

"If that is all, me boy, you were only dreamin'," exclaimed Lionel, much relieved at the simple explanation of Tom's "queer antics."

"All! Why, if you were to see it — but no — you would only see a fine turnip or something to eat, I bet," cried Tom bitterly.

This did not hurt Lionel's feelings in the least, but Aunt Julia, picking currants not far away, heard her nephew's concluding sentence. She arose and came forward, saying, "Don't speak so disrespectfully of the turnip, Tom. The poet Longfellow made a poem



"If that is all, me boy, your were only dreamin'."

regarding it once upon a time. Have you never heard it? It begins:—

‘Mr. Finney had a turnip,
And it grew behind the barn,
It grew there and it grew there,
And the turnip did no harm.’”

“Rot!” returned the boy, while his aunt, laughing, returned to her bushes.

“Well, Tom, let’s go together and if I see it too, it must be a real thing and I’ll grab it so fast it can’t get off,” proposed Lionel, good humoredly. Tom agreed to this proposition.

They started on the trip the next afternoon.

It was one of those perfect days when the sweetness of creation penetrates one’s very soul and the heart speaks to nature’s in a new language; the freshened breeze, the nodding flowers, the running water, the birds in leafy tree-tops, the shining of the sun, the manifold beauties of Mother Earth charm in a newer sense, as though having been blind, one’s eyes were newly opened.

In this way it appealed, though unconsciously, to the boys as they went along the road, walking or jumping or chasing butterflies, and when they reached the oak tree Tom fully expected to be made happy by a sight of the wonderful flower. It would surely bloom forth on a day like this; and Lionel, too, was inclined to think that there might be “something in it.”

Half reclining on the greensward neath the tree, they fixed their eyes upon the spot indicated by Tom and waited patiently. Had a curious pedestrian chanced that way he would probably have thought them two idiots escaped from the asylum, so long they sat gazing, gazing in one direction. But no unusual manifestation rewarded their watch.

Lionel's doubt again asserted itself.

"Well, Tommy, show us the wonder, I don't see no signs of it yet!" he cried impatiently.

Tom half repented him of his boisterous companionship. Lionel stood up and made mystic circles over the spot. Using a pliant switch as a divining rod, he chanted —

"Enie, meenie, minie, mo,
Whereabouts is it you grow,
Flower of sheol or of heaven
Appear in the sign of the *mystic seven!*"

"Shut up, you clown," growled Tom. "If it had come you wouldn't have seen it, and I might have known it wouldn't show to *you!*"

"Bosh!" returned Lionel. "Let's give up this fairy chasin' and go home. It was a dream — only a dream. I've glued my eyes there sharp enough to bore a hole in the ground and I don't see nothin' but that same identical little acorn a lyin' there on the grass!"

"Yes, but *I saw it!*" answered Tom, decisively.

C H A P T E R I I I

A PRIZE TOMATO

EARLY in the season Lionel had shown Tom an advertisement of a tomato plant in a paper. It certainly looked beautiful in the picture. The advertiser posed as a great-hearted individual who was willing to mail two specimen plants to anyone sending him twenty cents in stamps. For the expenditure of that insignificant sum on their part he would go to a great amount of trouble on his. Reading his statement one felt that he was a philanthropist genuinely sorry for those who did not possess one of his plants.

Lionel looked — and longed. In imagination he saw the real vine with its scarlet and green globes hiding among the leaves, an ornament to any garden.

If only he could procure one for his! The neighbors would hear about it and come and admire and perhaps he would later be able to sell them specimen vines at a profit.

“Then I want to branch out. I don’t believe in stayin’ at a dead level in the business. One must experiment,” he declared.

Tom, being even of a more aspiring mind, agreed with him, but the things he coveted, "Japanese wonders" and similar plants whose beauty was extolled in other advertisements, were so high-priced—a whole dollar or sometimes more—that they were obvious impossibilities, and later, after he had seen the Fairy Flower, the pictures, be they ever so alluring, had no attraction for him. But the twenty cents stared Lionel in the face—a cold, metallic fact.

Ten two-cent stamps, and none of the family had ever bought more than three at a time since he could remember! On that occasion Walter being sent to procure them considered the postmaster a cheat because he refused to give him three for five cents in the way they sold candy balls at the grocers'.

The acquisition of those stamps became a mania with Lionel. His mother gave him one, although she said she had no faith in such advertisements, she had heard of so many that were deceptions, she knew of a girl "in her time" who had sent for a correct picture of herself and had received by return mail a tiny pocket mirror.

Lionel paid little attention to her warning but put the stamp carefully away with one Tom had given him. He sold his second-best knife which had one good blade to a boy for five cents, that made four stamps and a penny besides.

After that his collection remained stationary for some time and then he had a stroke of luck.

It happened just after he had accompanied Tom to the oak tree in search of that mythical flower.

One day a lady from the city who was boarding at a neighbor's called on the Jacksons and the mistress of the house took her up through the arbor, now hanging with great bunches of green fruit and along the bush bordered path to the rockery.

She was much interested in the boys' undertaking; her genuine admiration of the Blue Ridge won their youthful hearts. Her city manners and stylish appearance had the effect of somewhat abashing them but when she expressed a wish to have some ferns like theirs to take home with her, Lionel overcame his shyness and gallantly offered to go in search of them.

Tom, of course, went along. They procured several varieties of ferns besides moss and different kinds of roots which they thought would please the lady. And they did. She expressed herself as much gratified and insisted on Lionel's taking a dime. He demurred at first, but rather feebly for the amount represented five stamps, so he took it at last, his outward reluctance hardly concealing his inward glee.

Tom refused to share, declaring that he had only gone on Lionel's invitation and to have part in the fun; therefore the penny and another were added to the dime, the necessary stamps to complete the ten bought and mailed to the address given in the advertisement

which Lionel had cut and pasted carefully in his greasy little note book.

In due time Lionel's visits to the post office were rewarded ; the package arrived and was carried home with reverent hands.

The vines did not look very promising to be sure. They were limp and brown but were planted carefully and given a good chance to thrive. The young gardener certainly looked for great results. But they did not flourish in the soil. For a week Lionel was not sure if they would even take root. One withered away but the other slowly revived under the boy's careful ministrations. It was a tedious process however. As time elapsed and it still gave no sign of any extraordinary growth, Lionel commenced to think that it would never in any way resemble the picture shown in the paper and when, in August, a tiny green tomato came to adorn the scanty vine, he looked upon his twenty cents as good money thrown away.

Mr. Jackson laughed and said that the experience was worth more than the money, but Lionel thought that he could easily have gotten along without the experience. His mother observed that "fools would learn in no other school," she had warned him — and then she repeated the oft told tale of her friend of long ago.

Walter dubbed it the "Great Expectations" tomato and Tom in his present mood was not sympathetic. He was disgusted that Lionel should grieve over a common vegetable that in any event would never

be anything *but* a tomato, for the boy's thoughts went ever to the fairy flower, whose real existence he never doubted.

A third glimpse of it was vouchsafed him about this time.

He sat beneath the oak one day feeling decidedly blue. He had almost given up hope of ever seeing the wonderful thing again, when all at once turning his head he noticed a strange golden light so faint that he was afraid a mere breath would dissipate it. Brighter and brighter it grew until at last there stood the flower-marvel complete.

The same yet ever changing, ever displaying some exquisite tint that appeared even more beautiful than the preceding one, and the tantalizing quality it possessed of vanishing, leaving no trace, nothing but the tormenting memory of its loveliness, added to its charm.

Tom, gazing upon it half fascinated, felt the presence of this intangible attribute; to know that it might vanish at any moment never to reappear was maddening. The thought came to him that its chief mystery lay in the shimmering orange light which enveloped it. If only that strange aureole would fade, he imagined he could pluck the flower, but there it remained as if to guard the treasure and give warning of encroaching hands.

Exasperated, Tom picked up his battered hat and threw it over the flower. For some time he hesitated before raising the hat.

To find the flower beneath would be ecstasy; to discover it gone, despair.

Tom held on gingerly to the rim of the hat as though he feared to see it, torn straw crown, blue ribbon band and all, carried away on the wings of the fairy creature beneath. At last he could no longer wait. He lifted the hat gently to find, alas, that the flower was gone! It had vanished as before, leaving no vestige of its presence, and Tom went home with empty hands.

He speculated as to how often it came out in the day or if it had any particular time for revealing itself. It had appeared to him on two occasions in the morning and on this afternoon. So it came to pass that all his spare time and all the time he could by any excuse take from his regular duties was spent in a disappointed watch beneath the oak tree.

He had sworn Lionel to secrecy "'pon honor," regarding the fairy flower and none other but he knew the reason for his long absences from home.

"I'm afraid Tom has no stability," complained his mother. "There's his garden over which he was so earnest left to the weeds, while a sight of Lionel's would do you good. I'm sure he didn't get it from *my* side of the house."

"I'm sure he didn't take his vacillation from *mine!*!" retorted Mr. Desmond.

"I'd be sorry to see Tom an exact copy of either you or Hiram," said Aunt Julia sharply, "although you're both well enough in your

way. I want him to have his own good and bad traits, not the virtues and failings of his ancestors. They were good enough in their way, too—plain sons and daughters of Adam and Eve—though on our side I've known few of the *daughters* who were considered *personable*." The speaker who was still a handsome woman, tossed her head at the memory of sundry youthful conquests and continued,—“Let Tom have some individuality of his own.”

“But shiftlessness!”

“I don’t think it’s that. The boy has only come to a knot and is tryin’ to unravel it, that’s all, and it’s evident he don’t want any of our help either.”

“No, he’s only happy when he turns his back on home an’ is off to the woods, an’ when he comes back he goes about his work as if he hated it.”

“Well, we all hate our work at times, and we’re four or five times as old as Tom. For my part I think the South Sea Islanders have the best of it, nothin’ to do—not even to dress themselves—an’ loll in the sun all day, while for us it’s washin’ an’ bakin’ an’ what-notin’ from New Year’s day to the last of December.”

While the lady entered her plaint anent the work which living in a civilized community entails, Tom stood surveying his garden with rueful countenance.

And no wonder. The weeks of neglect had caused more damage

than a heavy storm. The flowers strove to lift their bright heads through weeds that had been left to flourish at will and choke them. Some of the most promising had already succumbed to the invading host while the sturdier looked discouraged with the unequal struggle and ready to surrender their home to the foreign rabble.

The fresh, well-attended vegetables on the other side of the fence peeped in with wonder to see their beautiful sisters thus down-trodden and, no doubt, were thankful that their master was not like Tom.

Lionel regarded the ruin of his friend's work in sorrow, but the understanding had been that each was to mind his own plot of ground, not interfering with the other's, a pledge that Lionel often regretted. Only for that he would have tried to save some of the flowers, but a promise is a promise; he could but hope that the havoc wrought in Tom's garden would soon open his eyes to the evil consequences of his negligence.

"Say, me boy, your geraniums look like bony skeletons," commenced he that day.

"Whoever heard of *fat* ones! And they're no worse than your prize tomato," Tom rejoined.

Lionel winced at the allusion to his one failure. It was undeserved, as Tom well knew, but when one is angry a little matter of justice is seldom allowed to stand in the way. It was not Lionel's

fault that the "Great Expectations" had turned out so badly, but he was not going to let Tom's "grumpiness" turn him aside, so he laughed and continued:

"Well, that's so, but you can fix yours by a little weedin' and tendin', while that pesky tomato grows smaller an' smaller the more you fuss over it. I read in the paper that you can make geraniums bushy by pickin' out the top growin' point, that'll make 'em put out side shoots."

"I don't seem to care what becomes of 'em now," said Tom, disconsolately, recognizing his chum's good intentions. His moody glance turned from the wilderness of weeds at his feet westward in the direction of the road to the creek.

"Say, Tom, I've been thinkin' about that flower, the fairy, you know. Maybe it was only a kind of century plant that blooms once in a hundred years," Lionel observed earnestly.

"Then I'd be three centuries old, for I've seen it three times an' oh, Li, it's just fine! I wish it h'd come out the day you were along."

As Tom spoke, all his old-time animation shone in his eyes but the look of incredulity on Lionel's freckled face irritated him, and he picked up his rod and slouched away.

CHAPTER IV

EVERYTHING AWRY



E HAD not gone far until he heard a shout, "Hoi, Tom!" and Lionel making a trumpet of his hand hurried after him.

Tom paused.

"Say, Tommy, it just struck me that it's the nightmare you had, that sometimes plays the dickens with a fellow; better take a dose of physic." Lionel had run so fast and spoke so quickly that he was out of breath; his face glowed with heat and good nature.

"Or some *green tomato* catsup perhaps," retorted Tom angrily.

He stalked away with an air of hauteur and the farther he got the more brisk were his steps.

Walter coming up the path espied him.

"There goes Tom again with his everlastin' fishin' rig an' he never brings home a single catch; the sight of his funeral phiz must scare 'em all away. Ma says he's become a regular nimpole."

Lionel sniffed disdainfully.

"Nim-rod you mean."

"Rod or pole, what's the dif? I know it's something you fish with. There he goes, moonin' off. Say, Li, what's he been doin' anyhow?" Walter inquired confidentially.

"Why, he's just studyin' *nature*," replied his brother in an off-hand manner.

"What's that? He never has any books along."

Had Lionel known Shakespeare, he might have answered this somewhat puzzling question in the immortal words:—

"Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones and good in everything."

Not being acquainted with the bard he answered—

"Why, studyin' nature is to watch the plants an' things growin' till you know 'em all, root and branch, so Tom goes to the fields to watch the uncultivated —"

Walter interrupted him at this point with a snort of derision.

"*Uncultivated!* Then he'd better stay and study that weed-patch of his'n." He pointed to Tom's tangled flower beds.

Lionel regarded them thoughtfully. The pledge against aiding Tom surely did not include Walter.

"Tell you what, Walt, you might weed out that border of Tom's if you've nothin' else to do," he suggested.

Walter, being in an amiable mood and feeling sorry for the

crowded plants, set to work diligently. For a while all was quiet. Presently Lionel, digging around that miserable tomato vine of his, heard a chuckle. Looking up he saw, slightly above the fence, a broad-brimmed straw hat and a part of a face—a pair of dancing eyes half closed with amusement—while a would-be solemn voice cried—

“Say, Li, have you any more stamps to give away? I saw a picture of the dandiest cabbage-head you ever—”

Here a clod of earth thrown by the irate Lionel interrupted the speaker who gave a whoop of delight and artfully escaped from his brother’s wrath, leaving Tom’s garden little the better for his short-lived exertion.

His good offices were not repeated, the boy having pursuits and companions of his own to occupy his attention, so Tom cannot be blamed for failing to see any improvement in his wilderness of a garden that had become a subject of mirth to his acquaintances.

He felt the general disapproval, his father’s eloquent silence, his mother’s grumbling over his heedlessness, his duties disregarded or done unwillingly. Tootsy-Wootsy had not changed, being always ready to clutch his hair with glad baby cooing and to go to him in preference to all others.

Aunt Julia did not fail him. Perhaps something in her nephew’s discontent touched a harmonious chord in her own nature. She said

little but manifested her sympathy in tempting pies and cakes set aside especially for him.

Lionel, too, was faithful. Despite appearances he still believed in his friend and expected a return of their former close *camaraderie* until upon a certain day.

Tom in secret sighed. He lamented the fate of his flowers and often resolved to give up his trips to the oak tree, but so far he had not carried out his good intentions.

On this occasion he came to where Lionel was busy thinning out a too luxuriant growth of vines. He stood with his hands in his pockets in idle contemplation for a while. His friend's vigorous plants showed the result of the gardener's care and contrasted strikingly with the pitiable condition of his own one-time treasures which had slowly succumbed to the quick growth of weeds.

Tom had just come from an encounter with his mother who had given him a lecture on his dilatory ways. He could not blame her for her fault-finding attitude. He had disappointed her first cherished plans for him and this was the result of his own vaunted ambition. He smothered a sigh.

"Heigh-ho—I feel like this fence—kind o' zigzag," he said. His friend gave a grunt of sympathy.

"Li, you ought to transplant your tomato to my side of the fence," Tom remarked presently.

Lionel glanced at the sickly vine and smiled, while Tom continued, "I've half a notion to give it all up and go in for clerkin' as ma wanted me to."

"Hold down a stool!" Lionel jumped up thunderstruck.

"Yes."

Tom, feeling that he had delivered a telling blow, started away in a seemingly unconcerned manner, whistling softly to better carry out his part, while the bright eyes of Lionel followed him in startled surprise.

For the first time a doubt of Tom's mental powers occurred to his chum. Were all those rebellious speeches and declarations of independence to end thus ignominiously in an exchange of the free light and air of out-door life for the narrow prison walls of an office? Lionel arose and stretched his arms to their uttermost reach; in imagination he felt the brick walls of an office closing in around him. He shuddered and gazed across the far-stretching hills and the open fields where the corn stalks waved their green scarfs amid which Tom's boyish form at last disappeared.

Then Lionel slowly shook his head and ejaculated half disgustedly, half sorrowfully,

"Daffy!"

* * * * *

Tom, experiencing a wicked solace in his friend's discomfiture,

continued his journey which had its usual ending — the giant oak.

He clasped his arms around its rugged trunk and pressed his cheek against the brown rough bark.

The warmth of the day was penetrating. Myriads of insects skimming in the sunshine and the birds flitting from bush and tree kept up a constant buzz and twitter to the pleasing low accompaniment of the stream.

He forgot the annoyances of everyday life, but the ever recurring disappointment in regard to the fairy flower, whose third appearance was the last that had been vouchsafed him, still puzzled his brain in wondering what it was, whence it came, where it went, why it had appeared to him, if he should ever see it again. He was weary of the endless questioning to which had come no reply. If he could only accept Lionel's simple reasoning — he smiled at the utter impossibility of so doing.

"I wonder if it ever blooms at night," he pondered.

In imagination he saw it shining through the gloom of the summer night, — its luminous amber aureole making it visible to the watchful owls and the wondering nightingales. He resolved to steal away some evening ere long and see what would come to pass.

Presently a slight noise as of the dislodging of a stone interrupted his reverie. He turned his head involuntarily in the direction from whence it came.

C H A P T E R V

How It All Turned Out

"I'll take the showers as they fall,
I will not vex my bosom;
Enough if at the end of all
A little garden blossom."

—Tennyson.

COMING along the banks of the "creek" which went singing to the amber waters of the old Monongahela, was a man in an outing suit of gray cloth with cap to match, who carried a sort of alpine-stock of a cane.

Tom knew every country boy and all the men from neighboring farms who might chance that way and had also a speaking acquaintance with some fishermen from the busy world outside who spent a portion of their summers camping along the river, but this man he had never before seen, although in dress and bearing he reminded Tom of the city men; he carried himself with a certain careless air that was at once rare and distinctive. Tom felt this without being able to define it as from his shaded nook he craned his neck to follow the movements of the traveler, who he thought would continue his

journey along the shore, passing beneath the overhanging boughs of the oak skirting the base of the plateau and thus avoid seeing him. But in this he was mistaken.

He jumped to his feet as the stranger, reaching the narrow foot-path which led to the tree, turned and came along it straight to where the boy stood bare-legged, somewhat ragged, but in his own way undeniably interesting, with brown eyes shining in his thin, eager face.

With instinctive politeness, Tom reached his hand to his head. Now, to find his hat, he should have reached to his feet where it was lying in all its tattered glory, a fact which came to him, when, instead of the hat he found himself tugging at a thick tuft of hair which obstinately refused to be lifted, then as he drew back in a half embarrassed gesture, the stranger, changing his staff to his left hand, reached the other forward and shook hands heartily with the lad.

“Hello, my young friend,” he said.

“Hello, there,” returned Tom.

“And what is your name, may I ask?”

“Thomas Desmond, but most folks call me just Tom.”

“I hope you deserve the name, that you may continue to be just Tom — ‘This above all to thine own self be true; thou canst not then be false to any man.’”

There was something in the tone more than in the words of the

speaker which made Tom wince; something that recalled his father's contempt, his mother's anger, Aunt Julia's sympathy, and Lionel's disappointment.

The man apparently unconscious of his confusion continued in a genial tone.

"Well, my son, how goes the world; how does it treat you, or, rather, how do you treat it?"

"Very well, thank you, sir. Won't you sit down and rest?" said Tom, pointing hospitably to a branch of the oak which stood out invitingly a short distance from the ground.

"Just made to fit me," sighed the stranger contentedly, as throwing his cap to one side, he took possession of the rustic seat.

"I am rather done out. I left my friends some distance down the road to repair the car—our automobile, you know—and came on afoot for a change—guess I'll just take it easy for awhile till they happen along."

He took out a brown pipe and a small box of matches and proceeded to enjoy a smoke while Tom threw himself on the grass near by, much interested in his every movement.

"You haven't yet learned the intoxication of the pipe," the smoker observed half quizzically, and Tom rather ashamed, was obliged to acknowledge that he had not.

"But me and Li tried a toby one day."

"With what result?"

"We both got awful sick; they say you always do at first."

The stranger laughed.

As he continued to puff contentedly at his pipe, his eyes strayed around slowly surveying the scene.

In front, the road fringed with gypsum and tall mustard plants, the hills with trees and scanty bush; at their back the shallow stream was crossed some distance below by a graceful bridge constructed entirely of iron; to the right a wealth of fields and woods and on the left the church spires and cupolas of buildings in the town pointing heavenward.

For awhile the traveler sat in quiet enjoyment. The serene beauty of the scene affected him even as it had Tom a short time before.

Presently he turned his gaze to Tom, saying:

"Enchanted spot! Happy he who has the leisure to enjoy it."

"Oh, yes, sir, it's fine! And even on the warmest days there's a snipping breeze comes up from the river," cried the lad enthusiastically.

"And you, my young friend, seem as much a part of it as the birds and the trees."

"Maybe that's because I've been here so often lately."

"Ah, yes, the shade of this friendly oak is alluring, but you will find, my boy, as you go along through life, that pleasures like wine, are best taken in moderation." And then without seeming to notice the sudden dark wave that came in Tom's tanned cheeks, he took his pipe from his mouth and fixed the tobacco carefully in the bowl as he continued, "I trust, Tom, that you have not allowed the attractions of the oak to rob more useful pursuits of their dues? Yet methought your countenance as I saw it from the bend did not speak of inward joy despite the conjunction of youth, liberty and the summer day."

His tone of mingled raillery and chiding made Tom smile, though he feared he was being "jollied."

"Could you read my 'mug' that far away? Well, I was feeling kind o' grumpy," he admitted.

"Grumpy? We all know the feeling. What was your particular case of the grumps about?"

"Oh, I was just sitting here, just thinking."

"'The thoughts of youth,'" murmured the stranger, and then he turned his gaze enquiringly upon Tom.

It had seemed to Tom that the man was quite old, over forty he would have guessed, that being an age next to that of the white bearded patriarchs in his opinion; there was a deep line in his forehead and fine ones at the corners of his eyes, and his hair and

mustache were threaded with silver, but all at once he appeared in a different light—he might have been any age from eighteen to eighty, youthful and wise at the same time. And what wonderful eyes he had. Of a color that one would call blue, another gray and a third green, but Tom decided that they were all those shades commingled, as their habitual expression of joviality gave way to that of a kindly gravity,—a look indefinable—and Tom found himself sitting there with hands clasped tightly around his bare knees telling all his troubles and experiences to this total stranger more freely than he had ever related them to Lionel. The man listened with flattering attention.

“Tom, my boy, you and your garden remind me of an artist chap I used to know,” he commented after a short period of thought, “to hear people raving about his pictures put him in the depths. ‘Why, that’s only a daub,’ he would say disgustedly.”

“That’s the way I feel now when I look at my poor common flowers,” exclaimed Tom.

“Common flowers you say, my lad. It’s well my friend Burton didn’t hear that—he’s a crank on botany—you ought to hear his disquisitions on any poor little despised weed he may chance to pick up. But even for you and me who have not studied the subject—let us examine a petal of a flower—a single leaf of this tree. In its construction is there anything common? No, each is a mystery in

itself." Then as the leaf fluttered from his hand he continued, "I think if you were an artist, Tom, you too would see those wonderful pictures."

"But there's Lionel—he was disappointed about his tomato-plants, but he doesn't mind much."

"Your chum thinks of the picture he saw; he would never have evolved such a fine vegetable from the back of his head! Let me give you another instance. There's Gilmore, the author of 'Pins and Needles,' the latest popular novel—trash he calls it and swears he will never write another book, just as he has sworn after the publication of each of his previous half dozen. He also sees the fairy, but in a different form."

"And yet he keeps on writing," exclaimed Tom.

"Yes, just as Clem Arnold will keep on painting 'daubs' as he calls them. They just have to do it. The people are satisfied because they have had no tantalizing glimpses of something better. And it is well. What would we have to admire, to inspire, to emulate, if the painter, the composer, and all the rest—the merely talented—even genius itself—were to sit down to mope and repine because they could not snare the wonderful flower?"

He picked up Tom's battered headgear as he spoke and gravely examined it.

"Only an imaginative person like you, Tom, would try to catch

anything in a trap like this," said he as his hand went through a hole in the straw.

"I'm afraid I've made a mess of things," declared Tom ruefully.

"I read of a four-year-old boy who refused the candle his kind mother brought and sobbed himself to sleep in the dark because she could not get the moon to light him to bed. Now that boy should have been an Edison and made himself an electric light when he grew older as a sort of compromise."

"The next best thing to moonlight he could get?"

"That's it. Don't be discouraged, Tom. We all cry for the moon sometimes. But we have to keep right on in this work-a-day world. Even though inspiration shows a few of us the fairy flower, it is hard work alone that can give it expression. Hello, here comes my car," he cried, as a red automobile came steaming noisily upon the quiet scene. The occupants hailed him gaily. "Hurry up, Billy, if we are to make Pittsburg tonight!"

The stranger turned to bid the lad good-bye.

"But say, Tom, jump in with us and we will land you at home in a twinkling," said he, and before Tom knew it, he was perched there on that wonderful red motor car and being rushed through space as it seemed, forgetful of his fishing rod, that slender excuse for his many excursions from home. When he managed to get control of his breathing apparatus he looked along the road, which

appeared to him in a new aspect; it seemed as if the trees and their bird tenants looked on with surprise at this wonderful thing that was happening. It was, I think, the very first time that an automobile had come along the old road, the traveling public generally taking the National Pike, as it was called, which branched off a few miles below.

Tom and Lionel and most of the boys who were fond of exploring the country round about had seen those vehicles whirling along, but there were many residents of the village, those who stayed close to their own door-step, who had never beheld one of the "new fangled things," as they called them.

Therefore Tom's entrance upon the sleepy old town was theatrical, coming as he did, enthroned high on that wonderful red chariot.

The Desmond and Jackson houses occupied a corner of the street down which they raced, the machine with its load of gay excursionists, past the gardens — the whole length of them in fact — along the side street, from where Lionel's astonished eyes caught a glimpse of speeding color that made him think of a gorgeous animal in flight, and Walter let the pump handle go as if it had stung him, to race around to the front in order to see the "circus." Never again would Walter think that Tom was no "punkins" or a very poor excuse of a Nimrod — no, never after that — for Tom from his

exalted position actually threw him, Walter, an excited "hello," that he tried to make in his everyday tone. The whole town came out, not to speak of the excited occupants of the house before which the automobile actually stopped.

There was Aunt Julia carrying the baby, whose dimpled arms were wide outstretched to clasp Tom, with no surprise in her laughing glance; any honor paid Tom would never surprise the knowing Tootsy Wootsy; she took it all as a matter of course; Tom anywhere was Tom. And Tom's mother in spite of her late denunciation of his faults, hastening from the hot kitchen to the window, felt somehow after all that Tom was "an uncommon smart" boy; how perfectly at home he appeared with that distinguished-looking man in gray suit who lifted his cap so politely to the ladies.

Tom jumped from the car. He reached up to shake hands with his new friend:

"Good bye, Mr. —"

"Just Bill," said that gentleman as he gave Tom's brown hand a hearty clasp. "And remember, Tom, no dreams!" he called back as the impatient chauffeur, with a sort of magician's touch, set the red automobile in motion.

* * * * *

Tom bore his honors more meekly than did his friends for him. It was a long time before Walter Jackson could behold the hero of

the motor car actually splitting wood without feeling surprise at the condescension — not because Tom had been notoriously averse to that occupation for the last few weeks, but it somehow seemed so far removed from his elevated station on that memorable day; but Tom stuck bravely to his tasks day after day trying nobly to retrieve himself.

His father, who had been more disappointed than any one knew over Tom's "laying down," as he called it, went about as if with renewed youth; his mother, as mothers will, forgot all about his late shortcomings, and Aunt Julia a hundred times tried to keep from saying — but did not — "I told you so."

* * * * *

"Ain't it about time to go down to the house, Tom? There comes the moon rubbering along to see what keeps us so late."

"Why, there's a man in the moon. Don't accuse *him* of being curious," said Tom as he gave a last touch to some vines before standing up.

"But the moon is femi-nine. Don't you recollect the grammar says —"

"Bother grammars! I was thinking of something important just now. Say, Li, do you know it's just a year ago to-day since I met Bill?"



Anna B. Craig.

Tom threw Walter an excited "hello."

"A year! Why, it don't seem more'n half's long. He just ought to see the gardens—"

"He'll hear of 'em before long. Why, the fame of your 'garden sass' has reached the city. Didn't your Great Expectations tomato take the prize at the county fair, not to mention my flowers, the prize-winning Nora Desmond carnation, especially—I could fill a hundred orders if I had enough flowers this summer."

"One thing, we don't need to hire any toots," said Lionel gravely; "still we can't take all the credit; Bill's books gave us a lot of hints.—It's funny the way he always remembers you."

"Funny! Nothin' of the kind—he wouldn't forget!"

There was a proud ring of confidence in Tom's voice and his face glowed in a way that reminded Lionel of a time gone by.

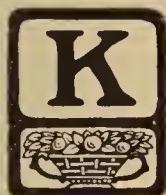
"Tom, it seems to me," said he reflectively, "that your Mr. Bill was the only original fairy chaser—he chased the plagued thing away."

For a moment Tom did not reply. He stood with his hand in his pockets. His gaze turned from his friend to the flowers at his feet which in the magic light of the moon took renewed beauty. Those common things as he had once regarded them, stood out in softened loveliness; there were certain purple lights and crimson shade and golden glows that recalled so vividly the wonderful fairy flower for whose sake he felt that he loved them every one.

"But you see, Li," he said at last, "it wasn't chased — it seems as if I just found the way to pick it up and carry it home with me."



KITTY'S RING



KITTY had a nice comfortable home and kind parents, but she was tired of the monotony of going to school and never seeing anything new. A party of six people came to the hotel in the little village to spend the summer, and Kitty looked almost enviously at the girl about her own age who wore fine clothes and rode in a carriage.

To be sure Lillian's face was as pale as a lily while Kitty's cheeks rivaled the roses in the garden in front of her house, and while Lillian became weak and tired with only a short walk, Kitty could run from morning until night with the greatest ease. But Kitty did not think of this, she did not know that it was on account of Lillian's poor health that her mamma had brought her to Villavale, and that her parents would have been much happier if their little daughter was as healthy and bright-looking as Kitty, for it was only at times that Kitty became dissatisfied with her lot in life.

"Am I to spend all my life in this quiet little town down be-

tween the trees, as if there was no great world outside where people enjoy themselves and have everything nice? This old blue dress and checked apron must look hideous to Lillian Lane!"

Then she thought of the pretty embroidered dress with its broad sash of pale blue ribbon and the dainty white lace-trimmed hat that had been worn by Lillian the last time she met her.

"And what a pretty ruby ring she has with her name engraved inside, that her papa gave her on her last birthday, and no one ever gives me anything," she murmured, forgetful of the fond kisses she had received from her parents on her last birthday when she had announced quite proudly that she was eleven years old.

Kitty was seated at the foot of a large tree a short distance up the hill at the back of her home. From her position she could see her mother sitting on the porch at the side of the house stitching away at a new apron for her little girl, because she could not afford to have the sewing done away from home and had to do it all, along with her housework; but it was a task of love when Kitty was concerned and that was the reason that Kitty was always neatly and prettily attired, so that people wondered how Mrs. Walton contrived to dress her so nicely. Kitty, however, often forgot all this. Consequently on this occasion, when the memory of Lillian's rich clothing rankled in her mind, the sight of the blue gingham material on which her mamma was working made her feel still worse.

"I am sick of it all!" she exclaimed, pulling idly at the grass around her.

"Sick of what, pray?" asked a thin voice, and lo! there in front of Kitty stood a wee woman, attired in a brilliant scarlet cloak, her bright little eyes looking sharply into Kitty's wide-open, bewildered brown ones; and no wonder, for never had Kitty imagined an object such as this! She was only as tall as Kitty's little finger; her face was as brown and shriveled as a leaf in autumn; she balanced herself lightly on a twig that had fallen from the tree, and she held a tiny golden-tipped wand in her hand.

"What are you sick of, little girl?" she repeated in a kindly voice.

"I am tired of everything," answered Kitty, her trembling tones showing the state of her mind.

"What do you wish? Perhaps I can help you."

"Who are you, please, ma'am?" Kitty ventured to inquire.

"I am Scarlethood, the queen of the oak fairies who live in this tree."

"Live in the tree! How do you get in?"

"Behold" — Scarlethood waved her wand three times upward and downward, saying in a sing-song manner —

"By this wand of magic wood,
In the hand of Scarlethood,
I command thee, mighty tree,
Open, open unto me."

To Kitty's surprise a tiny door opened in the tree beneath which she reclined, and in it stood a fairy page dressed gaily in purple and gold, holding in his hand a little white cap.

"It's a very easy matter, you see," said the queen. Then waving her wand again, the door closed, leaving no trace of its existence, although Kitty looked closely for it.

The fairy was pleased at the child's surprise.

"Now what can I do for you, little girl, before I go? Tell me what troubles you."

Then Kitty told all her grievances to the kindly little woman.

"Ah, ha, my dear, is that all? Why, I will give you the means of gratifying all your wishes. Take this ring, wear it always on the first finger of your left hand, and when you desire anything press your lips to the ring and you will obtain it."

So saying, she placed a pretty gold band ring with a peculiar greenish-blue stone set in it, on Kitty's hand and, hastily waving her wand, disappeared through the little door which opened to receive her.

Kitty rubbed her eyes which felt heavy; she would have thought it all a dream had it not been for the ring with its beautiful set glowing upon her finger.

"What should I wish for?" she mused, gently caressing the pretty stone.

She had always wanted to see something of the world, and no sooner had the wish entered her mind than she felt herself borne away from her seat beneath the oak. She saw her home and her mother disappearing from view, and finally lost sight of even the church steeples in Villavale, which never before had seemed so desirable a place to live in, still on and onward she was hurried by the invisible power, farther and farther away from home.

Finally she came to a great city, and her speed lessened, until she was set down at the door of a stately building, into which many ladies were going; Kitty followed them closely, through a large, wide hall, into an immense room, where little cots were placed in rows its entire length. Very dainty they looked, with snowy white spreads. Kitty was tall enough to catch a glimpse of their occupants; in one a little girl just about Kitty's age lay, her hands, arms, neck and face covered with bandages, while she moaned and tossed, crying for her mamma. Kitty heard the sweet-faced nurse explain to one of the ladies that the child's mother had been burned to death trying to save her.

"She is left alone in the world, poor dear, if she ever recovers from her frightful burns."

Kitty's tears fell thick and fast as she followed in the footsteps of the lady, who, leaving the large room, entered a smaller one in which a dozen children from three to twelve years of age played

around the floor; but also each one of them was afflicted in some way. Several had their little feet encased in steel braces, some walked with crutches, and one forlorn-looking creature crept to the lady's side, saying piteously:

“Is you my mamma?”

“Her parents are dead,” said the nurse. Kitty, unable longer to endure the sight of the friendless little ones, hurried away from the place.

She was impelled upward and over the tops of the houses, from the elegant, clean part of the city, to a narrow alley and into the top story of a tall, sooty building. She entered a room which was very small and dark, although it was the middle of the afternoon. Its furnishing was shabby but clean. In one window stood a flower pot over which a girl as big as Kitty bent, watching with loving interest a sickly-looking vine which grew in it. Her dress was very shabby; it was patched and mended until little of the original stuff remained, but it was clean and her brown hair was neatly brushed away from her brow.

“Dear little vine, you are doing nicely. How glad I am I brought you home the day of our Sunday School excursion to the woods! I wonder if you are lonely away from the beautiful country? See, I’ll place you where you will get a little sunlight; it’s too bad that tall factory over there shades so much of it away.”

How ardently Kitty wished she could show the girl the lovely flowers and brooks and trees at home, which she herself had sometimes despised.

She did not linger long in the close little room, but went down the dark, narrow stairs, flight after flight, until she reached the filthy court below, where several children, very forlorn and dirty, were trying to sail a paper boat in the muddy stream which ran through the gutter. Kitty hurried along the uneven pavements, anxious to leave the place where she felt she could hardly breathe. She soon met a little maiden who stood crying over a broken pitcher.

"I am afraid to go home, Aunt Miranda will lick me," she said.

Kitty, looking back when she had gained the street corner, saw a huge, red-faced woman advance, loudly scolding, while she unmercifully cuffed the poor child.

Kitty thought of the time she had broken a pretty vase while dusting it. How gently her mamma had admonished her to be more careful in the future, and had never said a cross word about it, although she was very fond of the ornament.

"I am glad I have no Aunt Miranda," she thought as she went on her way.

Soon she came to a beautiful mansion with a wide lawn in front as smooth as velvet, and going through the open door and upstairs found herself in what seemed to be the schoolroom.

Two girls, one eleven and the other older, and a boy of eight sat studying, while their governess, a very stiff and cross-looking lady, heard their recitations.

The girls were nicely dressed, one in dark red, the other in blue cashmere, with velvet trimmings and each wore a pair of pretty earrings, but in spite of their fine clothes, they looked even more unhappy than Kitty had when the fairy Scarlethood appeared to her.

"Not solved that problem yet? It is evident you did not try very hard."

"Oh, yes, I did, Miss Govern, but my head aches so I can't see into it."

"That is an old excuse, Alice. Your head never troubles you when you are reading those silly story books. I shall speak to your mamma on her return and have this reading stopped."

"Please don't, Miss Govern, I'm just at the interesting part where fairy Greatheart comes to release Goldenhair —"

"Nonsense! A great girl like you should think of other things. There is Nettie with a spot of ink on her nice dress! Careless girl! I shall tell your mamma to keep you in all day to-morrow for this."

Nettie, the younger sister, looked sorrowfully at the spot on her red frock.

"I hate these clothes! Other girls dress in plain clothes and can run and play and have a good time, while we have to sit prim

all day!" she exclaimed tearfully, whereupon Miss Govern, with an expression of horror, gave each of the girls a ringing blow on the head with a book; then went over to little Oscar, who bent over his book, not noticing the noise around, for he was used to it.

"Well, sir; this is a pretty looking copy book, and the ink all over your fingers, too!" He also received a slap and began to cry at the top of his voice.

The door opened. A tall, beautiful lady entered, dressed in rich brown silk, with glistening diamond ornaments; on her fair hair she wore a small velvet bonnet.

Miss Govern explained the state of affairs; the lady listened with a worried look.

"Was ever a mother so tormented as I? My children are the worst in the world! Oscar, stop that crying! Alice, give Miss Govern your book and let me hear no more complaints of this kind; and, Nettie, you will be sent to bed immediately after supper. I am going out to dinner at Mrs. Highflown's and after that to the concert for the benefit of motherless children," she explained to the governess, ere she hurried away.

Kitty heard all this in astonishment. What a different mamma had she, one who helped her with her lessons and was always interested in her pursuits and reading. She would not exchange places with these children for the world!

It was getting late in the evening when Kitty left this house. She was beginning to feel hungry, and the sight of a confectioner's window in which many dainties were displayed attracted her attention. She stopped for a moment, wondering what she should order. Presently two other girls about her own size also stopped and looked longingly in.

"Um, my—don't that cake look good? Wonder what kind it is," said one, smacking her lips.

"Why, that's fruit cake! I tasted it once. My brother went to the newsboys' dinner and put a piece of it in his pocket for me. Oh, my! but it was scrumptious!"

"Don't I wish I was rich! I'd go in and buy it. Wonder how much it cost! And this cake, six or seven on top of each other!"

"Why, that's jelly cake! Don't you know? Tell you what I'd do if I was rich. I'd live in the country and have a cow and chickens!"

"And keep pigs, too! Wonder what chicken tastes like."

Kitty's hunger almost disappeared in her wonder. Here were two little unfortunates, who would think her lot in life all that could be desired.

She pressed her lips to the pretty ring, saying: "I wish I had enough money to buy supper for these two and myself," and opening



A tiny door opened, and in it stood a fairy page.

her kid purse she found it filled with bright pieces of silver.

She gave several of them to each of the poor children, telling them to "Go and buy the cake and everything else you want." Their joyful amazement was pleasant to see.

Then she went into a restaurant and sitting at a small square table, ordered a meal for herself; but when the waiter brought it she could not eat. She thought of the cheerful little room at home which opened from the vine-covered porch, how it was her task to help arrange the supper table, to place in the center a large bowl of flowers, and to have her papa's easy slippers ready when he came home from work. She wondered if her mamma would miss her helping hand, and what her papa would say when he saw no little daughter with clean apron and smooth hair at the gate to give him a fond greeting.

She tried to swallow her coffee, but it was cold and sloppy—nothing like the fragrant drink her mamma made; and the bread was hard and the meat tough.

She missed the pretty silver mug of nice milk and the dish of delicious honey; above all, she missed the dear ones who always sat near her at the table.

It was growing dark. Kitty's spirits were getting lower and lower as she hurried along the city streets among the crowd which jostled her.

"I will wish to be at home again," she said, raising her hand, but to her horror the ring was gone.

She wrung her hands and sobbed, "What shall I do? I'll never find my way home."

She tried to find the place where she had lunched thinking, perhaps, she had left the magic ring there, but in vain; she was hopelessly lost in that great strange town!

She sat on the steps of a house in a quiet street to rest, for her feet were tired and blistered. Soon a large woman, with her head wrapped in a shawl, came along, and noticing the crying child, rudely grasped her hand and dragged her away. She was the ugly, red-faced creature, Aunt Miranda.

"Please let me go, you are hurting my hand," Kitty cried, but the woman only said: "Shut up your yelling, Sal, or the police will put you in jail."

"My name is not Sal!"

"Yes, it is, Sal Brown, my niece; I'll teach you to contradict me." As her great rough hand was raised, Kitty gave a loud despairing shriek.

"Why, Kitty, what is the matter; have you been asleep, dear?"

It was the sweet voice of her mother, who stood at her side beneath the oak tree in their own little garden.

"Oh, mamma, I'm so glad!" she cried.

She joyfully followed her into the house, where the table was already set.

"You have had quite a long nap, little daughter," said Mrs. Walton.

"I guess the fairy took pity on me and brought me away from that horrible woman," thought Kitty, as she put on her new apron and ran to meet her papa.

And after that day her dissatisfaction disappeared forever and she never saw Fairy Scarlethood or the green-blue ring again.



THE MAGIC MIRRORS

PART I

A POPPY GIRL



MATILDA, your emblem should be the poppy," cried Mrs. Lane, chidingly.

She stood in the doorway of a white frame dwelling — a kindly looking woman attired in a neat calico working dress; her hands were raised in a despairing gesture as she surveyed the small culprit who came up the green bordered path to the porch.

Matilda was a bright, gray-eyed girl, apparently nine years of age, with brown curls escaping below her straw hat and falling to the waist of her pretty print gown.

She paused in surprise and puckered her brows.

"A *poppy*, mamma, why?"

"You did not call at the grocery after all I told you. I waited in vain for the things you promised so faithfully to order."

"Oh, mamma, I'm *so* sorry."

"And I am sorry that I cannot depend upon your word, Matilda."

"Mamma, it really isn't my fault! There must be a puncture in my *remembrancer* that lets things out. I was so sure I'd call at Rand's but I met Sally Miller and we turned down another street," Matilda explained, following her mother into the pleasant kitchen where the mid-day luncheon awaited her.

While she enjoyed the appetizing things her mother had prepared she asked:

"But about the poppy, mamma—why should it be my emblem?"

"Because it typifies forgetfulness," returned Mrs. Lane.

"And what's the flower of *remembering*, mamma dear?"

"And there is pansies—that's for thoughts!" I wish my little girl might wear one."

Matilda, on her way to school, resolved to earn the right to wear the purple pansy. She was well aware that her forgetfulness of things often annoyed her mother sadly and put her to unnecessary trouble.

"I will deserve to wear the pansy," she said.

But resolving and doing are quite different matters.

At home that evening she again reverted to the subject.

"What are you and your mamma talking about so earnestly,

Mattie? All I could hear was ‘poppy’ and ‘pansy,’ ” said Mr. Lane throwing the paper down and drawing the little maid to his side fondly.

Mattie explained. Her father looked grave.

“ Forgetfulness is a serious failing, my love. I only hope you will try to cultivate its opposite, as your mamma wishes. While you are yet young is the time to plant good seed. If you grow up to earn your own living as so many brave girls are doing, that would prove a great handicap. Think of the result if the trained nurse should forget the doctor’s instructions, if the railway employe forgot his orders, if clerks should forget to send purchases promptly. In all walks of life it would prove a grave fault, and so your mamma finds it when her instructions are forgotten. What would become of you and me if she were to become as forgetful? You would not be called in time for school, the housekeeping department would fall to pieces, destroying our comfortable home.”

“ Mamma *forget!* Why, she’s the *preciousest* old *pansy* in the world,” exclaimed Matilda emphatically, thereby upsetting his gravity, and perhaps that of his lecture.

Mrs. Lane, who had listened to the conversation, went about her work apparently lost in thought, of an amusing nature, however, for she smiled to herself as she put the cream pitcher away in its place.

The next day when Mattie reached home the little square table in the kitchen was covered with its "tidied-up" red cloth with the white one still folded upon it; no singing coffee boiler steamed on the stove, no inviting looking dishes were ready to be uncovered, and no busy mother was bustling about.

Presently the latter came from the front of the house.

"Why, mamma, what's wrong?" inquired Matilda.

"Why, my dear?"

"Look!" She pointed toward the empty table.

"Well?"

"Lunch isn't ready, and I wanted to hurry back to school to do my sums before the bell rings," Mattie cried, aggrieved.

"Well, I declare, child! Mrs. Black came in and we had such a long chat in the parlor, it appears that lunch must have escaped my mind."

The little girl glanced curiously at the speaker. Was there a sly gleam in her eyes, a veiled meaning in her quiet declaration?

"How funny! Well, I'll lay the cloth and set the table," said Mattie discreetly.

The following Saturday Matilda busied herself in the garden, attending her flower beds. For the last few days she had taken a special interest in the pansies. She wished she had some poppies, also, though she did not want those flowers to be peculiarly her own.

Mrs. Lane was busy in the house from which came a delicious odor of stewing blackberries; Matilda had helped to stir them before coming out.

After a while she received a summons from the doorway.

"Matilda, I wish you would run down to Rand's and bring me a dollar's worth of sugar. I must have it right away or my jam will be spoiled."

Matilda obeyed, glad to have a good run in the fresh morning air. It took but a short while to reach the store and hurry up the clerk. She started homeward briskly, package in hand.

Half way there she met a group of school girls talking and chattering like a bevy of birds. Evidently they knew something interesting.

They hailed the curious Matilda.

"Are you going, Mat?"

"Where?"

"To the Sunday School picnic at Marsh's grove."

"When is it to be, girls?"

Matilda stopped and heard all the particulars. At last she continued her journey accompanied by her dearest friend, Sallie Miller. They had profound secrets for each other's ears alone. While they loitered at a shop window to admire the display, another girl came hurrying along.

"Come and hear about the picnic, Della!" they cried, but she shook her head.

"I really can't stop, girls, ma is waiting for the milk."

Matilda heard the answer in dismay.

"Oh, Sallie, mamma will be so angry," she exclaimed, rushing away.

"Matilda, Matilda, do you know how long you've been on a twenty minutes' errand? A whole hour!"

"Is the jam spoiled, mamma?" inquired the delinquent, ruefully.

"No, but no thanks to you. I had to borrow sugar from Mrs. Harlow."

Matilda returned sorrowfully to her flower bed but when she glanced at the pansies, their round eyes seemed to glare at her reproachfully.

"How mean they are, to stare so, and I do feel badly to have disappointed mamma. I might as well have a cabbage head on my shoulders at once," she muttered.

On the following Sunday morning, Matilda went to the wardrobe for her pink lawn dress. When she took it out what was her surprise to find it just as she had left it a week before with the ruffle torn and hanging loose where it had caught on a nail. It could not be worn that way and she specially desired to wear it. Sallie

would have on her blue batiste, and they had planned to visit a friend after church.

Mrs. Lane glanced in. Seeing the disappointed droop to Mattie's lips, she asked —

“What's wrong, daughter?”

“Mamma, I asked you to be *sure* to mend this yesterday, and see!”

She held out the unfortunate dress. The lady smoothed out the torn ruffle.

“That is too bad, but blame it on the poppy,” she said quietly.

Again Matilda detected that gleam in her mother's usually placid glance.

“But you never *used* to forget, mamma.”

“Have you ever noticed how the odor of a flower scents the air all around? Perhaps your poppy propensities have affected me in the same way.”

Mattie gazed wonderingly at her mother. Never before had she taken this manner of speaking in riddles. It was a new phase in her character and Matilda had thought that she knew her thoroughly — so slow to anger, so quick to excuse, to forgive, her daughter's foibles.

While she arrayed herself in her second best gown, a pretty sprigged pique, Matilda decided that she did not like riddles of any kind.

"You will have to wear the poppy, too, mamma," she cried.

"Well, under existing conditions I fear I have cultivated the pansy too long," was the enigmatical reply.

As time went on Matilda found that her mother was growing even more forgetful.

No longer were the child's stockings found to her hand carefully darned; the holes grew bigger and bigger. No longer was her hat ready on its hook where she could snatch it hastily on her way out; she was obliged to wait and hunt for it where she had thrown it the night before. Her shoes were not sent to be mended, strings and buttons were not replaced.

"Mamma has become very *poppified* indeed," she thought one day, as she brushed her dusty hat with impatient dashes of the brush.

So many little things formerly seen to all but unnoticed by the little girl no longer received attention and the result vexed her greatly.

She could not complain, however, being herself subject to her old failing, and still forgot so many, many things.

In the olden time she had been wont to say: "Oh, mamma, I'm so sorry I forgot," and expect that to make amends for her mother's annoyance and now her mother had a similar plaint:—

"It must be the poppy in the family."

“There must be *a whole bed* of poppies,” returned Mattie in disgust, for she had asked her mother to prepare a lunch to take along on a flower hunting trip with Sallie that day, and no lunch was ready.

The lady smiled in that unaccountable way.

“We should try and root them out,” she observed suggestively.

“And plant pansies — let’s, mamma.”

“It is a compact,” said Mrs. Lane, stooping to kiss the upturned lips.

The little girl called good-bye and bounded joyously out of sight and the lady watched her with all the mother-love shining in her eyes, while still wearing that smile which had so often puzzled Mattie.

P A R T I I

A PANSY GIRL



ALLIE and Matilda had a pleasant walk to the field which they proposed to explore that day. The road skirted hills partly covered with small trees and bushes. They gave frequent glances upward in search of flowers.

All at once a bright gleam of red amid the green attracted their attention. They climbed the hillside with eager steps.

“How lovely,” cried Sallie.

“Poppies!” said Matilda.

Sure enough, there they were, a cluster of fragrant poppy flowers, raising their gorgeous heads from surrounding walls of green.

“Just what you were wishing for, Mat.”

They dug up the roots with care and put them in the basket.

Presently they reached their destination, but without finding any more flowers; woodland treasures were scarce.

Tired with walking, they sat in the shade of a “honey-pod” tree to rest and take lunch. Not the dainty affair with a taste of

many good things such as Mrs. Lane had provided for other outings,—Mrs. Miller, Sallie's mother, the overworked mistress of a large household being too busy to be called upon for that,—it consisted instead of huge slices of bread and butter and a square of gingerbread hurriedly prepared by Mattie herself. Not very appetizing, certainly, but welcome to youthful hunger, along with cold sparkling water from a neighboring spring.

When they had cleared away the fragments, Sallie started for a near-by ridge to discover what lay beyond while indolent Matilda stretched herself comfortably on the greensward to await "Scout Miller's" return.

The blue of the sky was visible between the interlacing tree branches above and saucy flecks of sunlight darted through, making Mattie blink her eyes.

"Isn't it time for Sal to be back?" she thought after a while.

She detected a sweet heavy odor and inhaled it with delight. It came from the basket. "Poppies," she murmured drowsily, "But what's keeping Sallie?"

She arose languidly and looked toward the ridge, but no Sallie was in sight.

"She must have met a band of Indians like a real old-time scout, so I'll go armed cap-a-pie (or hat-minus-pie, thanks to mamma) and rescue her."

She followed the path her friend had taken and soon reached the top of the knoll.

It declined gently on the other side in sloping fields of varied browns and grays and greens relieved in spots by the dun red and black and white of cows which had sought the welcome shade of the trees. Far below a country road crept along like a great yellow snake. A flour mill was seen beyond and then the river sweeping around a bend.

How serenely beautiful it was.

But Matilda's glance soon strayed back in a further search for Sallie but that small personage in her flaxen braids and stiffly starched skirts was nowhere in sight.

Matilda pursed her lips in what would be considered a very unladylike way—a shrill whistle disturbed the air for a moment—and then—the screwed-up mouth opened suddenly to its widest extent with a scream of mingled surprise and delight.

“Our flag! How beautiful!”

No wonder she clapped her hands with joy, for there right at her feet was stretched an expanse of flowers, three broad bands, a stripe of poppies, then one of white violets with purple pansies beside, forming an almost perfect design of the American flag.

“Sallie, Sallie, where are you? Why didn't you come back

and tell me?" screamed Mattie in rapture and reproach, longing to enjoy it all in company with her chum.

But no voice replied. Sallie was nowhere to be seen.

"Oh, the lovely, lovely things! Sal, Sal-e-e-!" cried Mattie, with all the strength of her young lungs.

"What's the matter, pray?" said a piping voice.

Mattie looking in the direction from whence it came, saw a tiny form, only a few inches high standing between the red and white stripes of the flag. She was dressed in vivid crimson all broidered o'er with golden stars.

"W-h-y-!" was all that Mattie could articulate.

The little creature rubbed her eyes.

"I was just in the midst of a nice nap," she exclaimed querulously.

Mattie was about to make excuses, when another voice, thin but musical was heard saying:

"I'm sure it was time for you to awake! Such a sleepy head as you are!"

A second mite of a person had risen up between the white and blue stripes, directly opposite the first. She wore a gown of shining blue, with pansy eyes worked in a beautiful pattern around the hem.

"Mind your own affairs, Madam Pry," was the answer she received.

Mattie thought it sounded queer to hear those sharp remarks. To be sure she and Sallie often addressed each other in a similar strain but on the part of such elegant appearing little ladies it was bewildering to say the least, and when the same voice added, "Besides, this girl should have more consideration for me—she is one of my band," she could only gasp: "W - h - y - ! Who are you?"

The first voice chanted in reply—

"I am the fairy Poppæ—
Those mortals I'll claim yet,
Who use in spring or winter gay,
The magic word Forget!"

The singer bowed and stepped back with a flourish of her tiny wand. Then the second voice was raised in expostulation.

"You cannot claim her yet. She is wavering between you and me."

The other laughed derisively while Mattie said timidly:—

"Who are you, please?"

She liked the appearance of the second comer, who seemed amiable and friendly.

The latter stepped forward and sang—

"I am the fairy Panzia,
Who in spring or bleak December,
Claims those mortals for her own,
Who use the magic word Remember?"

She, too, retired with a gracious bow and a wave of her tiny wand.

Both fairies had long golden hair and wore crowns that glittered with gems which sparkled in the sun and emitted rainbow tints. In Poppæ's red predominated, and in Panzia's blue.

"However, let us be hospitable. Come, little mortal, and see the region where I hold sway," exclaimed Poppæ.

"Thank you, but it is time to go home and I must find Sallie," faltered Matilda.

Poppæ laughed: "If *you* should return home on time, it would scare your mamma."

Mattie did not relish the joke. "She is a malicious creature," she thought resentfully.

"I should like you to see my kingdom," said Panzia graciously. "You will have plenty of time. Come, follow me."

She waved her wand.

"Come, follow me," echoed Poppæ, also raising her wand.

Mattie wished to obey Panzia. She had no desire to accompany Poppæ but against her will she found herself impelled to do so.

The fairies turned in opposite directions. Poppæ looked back. Seeing the little girl following her so reluctantly, she cried in triumph —

"Come follow me and join my band,
Afar in Poppy Fairyland."

How quickly she glided while Mattie rushed after as speedily, across the fields, through a dense thicket of thorn trees, which strangely enough did not tear her dress, until they reached the bleak side of a towering mountain.

Here they stopped.

"In the name of Poppæ,
Open, open, unto me!"

Thrice the queen rapped with her wand upon a great stone which opened like a door into the mountain side to admit them.

She entered, beckoning her companion to do likewise.

The child obeyed, still against her will.

"I wish Sallie were along," she thought.

Mattie felt singularly forlorn when she heard the gate closing with a mighty bang behind her. Looking over her shoulder she was surprised to see fairy Panzia gliding along in her wake.

"W - h - " she began, but the little lady put her finger warningly to her lips.

Mattie felt more comforted, feeling that she had a friend so near.

They traversed a tunnel-like passage where a semi-twilight prevailed which led them to a deep valley arched by the sky and enclosed

by sloping hills. An overpowering scent of poppies filled the air. Those flowers grew in profusion everywhere but larger than any Matilda had ever before seen. Poppæ seated herself on the largest and most gorgeous one of all, elevated in the center of the valley.

“This is my throne. Behold my court.”

She waved her wand. Instantly beside each of the numerous poppies stood a diminutive creature attired in red,—red of all shades but none of so vivid a hue as Poppæ’s.

“Behold a new candidate to our band. She has served me well on earth,” cried Poppæ, presenting the little girl.

Shrill shouts of approbation were heard, which were not at all relished by Mattie. She would have protested but she had not the power, the spell that had compelled her to follow Poppæ was still upon her.

“What is required of a mortal in order to gain admission to Fairyland?” the queen inquired.

They answered in a sing-song chorus:

“Ere the barriers she may pass,
Let her look into the magic glass.”

Before they had concluded the song a tiny stream of water came down the hillside and spread itself before the astonished eyes of Matilda until it assumed the appearance of an immense mirror of burnished silver.

While she gazed upon it fascinated, many scenes were imaged within, as though it were the stage of a theatre.

First appeared a village where crowds of boys or girls chatted or played games, forgetful of everything else. Scenes enacted in their respective homes were visible at the same time.

Distracted mothers awaited impatiently the medicine for sick babies, while the messenger lingered at play; others postponed visits because the daughter who was to take her place loitered with the girls, dinners were spoiled, plans upset, lessons unlearned, everything was topsy-turvy while from the offenders came a nerve-destroying chorus of "I'm so sorry—I forgot!"

This made Matilda wince, remembering how often she too had sung that weak refrain.

One boy who resembled little Ted Miller was seen as he started from home reciting carefully—

"A pound of tea at one and three,
And a pot of raspberry jam,
Two new-laid eggs, a dozen pegs,
And a pound of rashers of ham.

I'll say it over all the way,
And then I'm sure not to forget,
For if I chance to bring things wrong,
My mother gets in such a pet."

While he went along he repeated it at intervals, distracted in

the meantime by the doings of his chums and changing the order at each repetition until when he reached the shop he cried with confidence—

“A pound of three at one and tea,
A dozen of raspberry ham,
A pot of eggs with a dozen pegs,
And a rasher of new-laid jam.”

Matilda was obliged to laugh but Poppæ looked grave—

“I may lose that boy yet. He *tries* to remember!” she murmured.

The scene changed. It was winter. In a rickety room within a dingy tenement house a woman lay sick on a narrow pallet. Around her several children stood weeping, hungry and cold. A luxurious carriage came dashing down the street in which sat a lady wrapped in costly furs. She had once been an intimate friend of the poor woman, but now she went past unheeding, while in the air between them, the words “I forgot,” were formed in letters of glittering icicles.

There were many scenes where men and women in shabby attire received only blank stares from one-time close companions, now types of arrogant wealth.

That kind of representations amused the fairies who laughed immoderately and sang: “I forgot—on purpose!”

Matilda noticed that each of the prosperous individuals who ignored their old friends so heartlessly carried a small cane which was invisible to all except those privileged to gaze upon the magic mirror.

"What are those queer canes?" she asked Poppæ.

The latter spoke to a courtier at her side, a fat, pompous little fellow as broad as he was long. He bowed and disappeared to return a few minutes later carrying a box which resembled a violin case.

This he opened and displayed a lot of the curious looking canes. They were made of some transparent material through which ran a spiral thread of mist.

"These are *Shortened Memory Sticks*," explained the fat fairy condescendingly. "You do not need them — you forgot unconsciously when you would often prefer to remember — these are for the people who remember when they would rather forget."

"I don't think I understand," returned the girl.

"Well, I'll explain. When a man wishes to forget a kindness done, or a claim upon him for services rendered by another, or to give a cold stare of unrecognition to some ragged chap who perhaps was his dearest friend in days gone by, he has only to ask for a *Shortened Memory Stick* — we supply them on demand; that's one advantage in belonging to our Band."

Matilda tossed her head scornfully.

"Do that kind of people belong here? Then I would not join for all the world!"

The fairies laughed derisively, swinging their tiny bodies from side to side.

"Hear, hear!"

"Only *human nature*, my dear," said Poppæ.

"Not *good* human nature then. I'm sure most people are not so *vile* as that!" protested Matilda indignantly. She turned away and again gave her attention to the mirror.

It portrayed a different scene.

It was night. Inside a frame tower-like structure built near a network of railway tracks sat a young man apparently lost in thought. Beside him on a table a telegraph sounder clicked busily. Above it there still hung on a hook an order which should have been delivered to a train which had passed fifteen minutes before. Suddenly the operator jumped up in consternation,—snatched the yellow paper and ran to the door. Afar were heard screams of pain following a terrific crash caused by the impact of two locomotives. The watcher moaned pitifully and struck his head in despair,—he muttered something which formed on the air in letters of fire the words, "I forgot!"

Then was pictured a ward in a hospital where a dying man

breathed painfully, praying in vain for water to moisten his parched lips while the attendant sat in an adjoining room engrossed in a game of cards.

Matilda felt herself growing weak with horror at all the sorrowful scenes with their accompanying legends—"I forgot," "I meant to," and "I'm so sorry."

"I cannot stand any more of this," she thought.

Making a great effort she turned her head away.

Instantly she heard a cracking sound. She glanced back and saw the mirror shivering into a thousand pieces. Thinking it would fall upon and overwhelm her, she turned and fled not knowing where.

Presently a familiar voice whispered, "Come, follow me." The blue robe of Panzia glimmered ahead. Matilda did not hesitate this time to obey her command.

They retraced their way through the tunnel to a ponderous door. Matilda tried the knob but it was locked.

"Don't be uneasy," returned Panzia hearing her exclamation of dismay, "I thought of bringing this."

She unfastened a small golden key from her girdle and put it into the lock.

Immediately the door swung outward and they were free! They heard the door clang to with a resounding crash. Matilda

turned to where it had been and saw only the rocky side of the mountain.

"We will return by another route," said Panzia, gliding away to the right.

They gained a pleasant field where pansies grew in profusion. "Strange that Sallie and I could not find even one!" thought Mattie.

What was her joy a few minutes later to see the flower flag spread out at her feet.

"Let us rest here," Panzia said, seating herself beside the blue stripe and motioning her companion to do likewise. Matilda was glad to comply. After a short silence Panzia observed, "Now that you have looked into Poppæ's magic mirror, I should like you to see mine."

She took from her golden girdle a tiny hand-glass framed in pearl. In the act of passing from her hand to Matilda's it grew from the size of a dime to that of a silver dollar. Matilda surveyed it with delight.

"I wish Sal could see it," she murmured.

She looked everywhere around for her friend but she was not to be seen. Then she glanced into the mirror and saw strange scenes pictured there as large and true to life as had been those in the other glass, but more pleasing.

Happy homes were seen, where lived the boys and girls who *remembered*, busy cities teeming with workers, each at his task, miners toiling in the earth, sailors on the sea, each doing his part in the active work of the world.

"But why do those men and women who are standing around idle look with contempt upon the ones who are doing the hard work?" asked Matilda suddenly.

Panzia sighed. "Ah, child, you have an observant eye. It is *because* they are doing the work. 'Tis the way of the world!"

Before Mattie could protest against this seeming injustice, a different scene was reflected in the mirror. The sick were visited, the sorrowful consoled. Again was shown that miserable room where lived the suffering woman with the children cold and hungry, but this time the door opened and a woman entered bringing heat and clothing and food, with wine and tempting dainties to coax the invalid back to life. How beautiful it was to see!

The scene changed to a prison cell. A man sat on a narrow cot, his head bent in unutterable weariness and loneliness as he thought of his early days of careless childhood, the later time of temptation, the present punishment and the future, a coming procession of gray, empty days like this.

Steps were heard in the stone corridor and angel visitors in the form of mortals came with cheering words engendering in the

prisoner's soul repentance for the past, atonement in the present and hope for the days to come.

"I was sick and in prison and you visited me," was written in fragrant white flowers on the walls of the cell.

Slowly the scene faded to give place to another where persons in shabby garments — apparent failures in the battle of life — turning away to avoid an expected cold stare of unrecognition from prosperous friends, were hailed by the latter with outstretched hands — positions were found, help given and, best of all, cheering words of kindly remembrance were spoken.

Then came asylums where children were taught and cared for. Along the different roads leading there, wagons went with loads of fruit and vegetables or wearing apparel, all for the orphans. Christmas time was shown where these children rejoiced over gifts of toys and books in a hall hung with green garlands across which stretched an arch bearing the inscription in shining letters: "Inasmuch as you did it to the least of these, my little ones, you did it unto Me."

"Oh, Panzia, how beautiful! Who are all those people who go around doing good?" exclaimed Matilda, with glistening eyes.

"They are members of the Thoughtful Band," returned the fairy.

"I wish that I, too, might join!"

"And so you may, my child, if — "

That was all Matilda heard. Panzia and the magic glass and the brilliant flower flag faded away and she found herself lying beneath the "honey-pod" tree with the basket of poppies at her side and Sallie leaning over, tickling her nose with a blade of grass.

"Oh, you lazy thing!" cried Sallie.

"Where did you go, Sal? I hunted for you everywhere!"

"I went up to the top of the ridge, of course! Then I called back but you never stirred. So I sat down and rested for awhile and then came straight back," explained Sallie volubly.

"Then you must have gone to sleep," returned Mattie. "It's too bad you didn't stay awake and go with me to see so many strange sights!"

Sallie thought so too, when on the way home she heard all about the fairy queens and their wonderful mirrors.

"I'll try to join the Band too; I don't forget things like you do, Mat!" she observed, not vauntingly but as a matter of fact.

When Mattie related her experiences to her parents that night they were much interested. They praised her determination to become a member of the Thoughtful Band, saying that they too should like to belong.

Singular to relate, from that day forward Mattie very seldom forgot and her mamma never failed to remember.

On Matilda's next birthday she was presented with a blue enameled pansy breastpin with a tiny white stone like a drop of dew in the centre.

"And what do you get, mamma?" she inquired.

"My reward is a thoughtful little pansy girl," began Mrs. Lane with a smile.

"Who in spring or bleak December," interrupted Mattie—

"Claims the magic word Remember," cried Mr. Lane.



THE OLD GRAY SHAWL

CHAPTER I

A MYSTERY



MILLICENT, where, Oh, where did you resurrect that heirloom," cried Asia as she shut her exercise book with a slam and wheeled around on the piano stool.

Millicent who was posing in the doorway for her cousin's benefit crossed the room and stood before a mirror to drape the silken folds of the shawl around her shoulders.

"You call it an heirloom as if you knew its history," she said.

"That's what it is—"

"Funny how you came to know about it!"

"Funnier than you didn't!"

"Funny? Why, I never saw it before."

"But you have heard of it!"

"No!"

"Oh, you're joking! Here I'm only a cousin and I've heard its history!"

Millicent thought she detected a hidden meaning in the voice more than in the words of the speaker which aroused her curiosity.

She stepped quickly to Asia's side.

"Well, to whom did it belong?"

"Why, to — Oh, you're just teasing — you know all about it!"

"No, why should I, when no one ever told me?"

"That's the strange part, that no one ever told *you* — but perhaps —"

"Well, perhaps what?" Millicent returned sharply, tired of her cousin's evasions.

Asia fingered the buttons on her cuff while she said rather constrainedly —

"Oh — why — then —"

"Well — then — why?"

"Maybe Aunt Kate didn't want you to know!"

"The idea! Why not me when you know —"

"Oh, it's nothing — just an every-day affair — but there comes Cora up the street. I want to speak to her!"

"I'll ask mamma about the shawl!"

Asia, who was going out the door, turned back and said impressively:

"Whatever you do, don't ask her. It would only give her pain. There are associations —"

Millicent stood gazing after her cousin with a puzzled expression.

"Why all this mystery," she mused, "and if there is anything unusual connected with the shawl, why have I never heard of it?"

The shawl was a flimsy thing of a silver gray shade with a black silken knotted fringe; a faint tracery of black silk threads ran through it to within a few inches of the fringe where the threads were more heavily woven to form a border of black and gray. So old-fashioned and so dainty, it had at once aroused Millicent's admiration when, rummaging through a box in the attic, she had come across it just an half hour before.

Asia's vague words gave it an added interest.

"Oh, you precious old thing! To think that you have a history—and a mystery! I'll wait and make that aggravating Asia unravel it for me. But why it should vex mamma to be asked about it I can't see! Maybe it belonged to grandma—but then mamma loves to talk about her and to show me things that belonged to her. She always says that if we really believe our dead are only sleeping and their spirits happy in heaven then we should *act* as if we believed," mused the little maid as she folded the shawl and ran upstairs to put it away.

Asia Grove and her sixteen-year-old brother, Paul, lived in the

city a hundred miles away. They had come the previous week to spend vacation at Riverview.

Asia was thirteen years old, large for her age and sometimes acted like a young lady, but she and nine-year-old Millicent had at once "struck up" a friendship. Millicent felt proud of Asia's preference for her society in view of the fact that the other girls, her sisters, Cora and Maud, were nearer Asia's age.

The latter liked to watch Millicent's eyes opening wider and wider as she told of the happenings at the boarding school which she had attended a couple of terms. Millicent enjoyed the recital of the fun and frolic, the pranks the pupils played on each other, the midnight banquets on stolen sweets, the many methods of eluding rules and deluding teachers, but she was half frightened at the thought of being there among so many strangers. She felt that she would never, never feel at home as did Asia who was evidently a ringleader in all these stirring events; she half envied the self-possession and the daring of her mischief-loving but warm-hearted friend. Perhaps Asia sometimes exaggerated the fun and the danger but if so, her hearer's open-eyed astonishment was an excuse; to embellish a tale for the ears of an appreciative auditor is certainly a temptation which a born *raconteur* can seldom resist.

Asia looking into her little cousin's dreamy eyes saw herself a heroine, and felt that she was admired immensely; unconsciously

she tried to act up to what Millicent expected of her in generosity and courage; their intimacy had a reciprocal good, in toning the older girl's exuberant spirits while increasing the self-reliance of the younger.

"I'd be so afraid of the big girls! I do hope mamma won't send me away to school!" Millicent exclaimed one day.

Her sisters laughed at her dismay, saying they would be glad to go.

"Anywhere, anywhere away from this pokey old place," cried Cora.

"It keeps one such a 'muff' to stay at home," added Maud.

"And one learns a lot by mingling with the world," declared Asia with her most worldly-wise air.

"There's one thing you don't learn," said Paul as he entered the room at this juncture.

"And what is that, pray?" inquired Asia.

"How to spell!" His sister gave him a withering look.

"You know that letter you gave me the other day from Aurora Simmons — "

"Which contained a message for you? Yes."

"Well, she spelled pitcher — p-i-c-h-e-r."

"A mere slip of the pen — she overlooked the T!"

"And that supercilious Vera Styles wrote 'please *ancer* imme-

jutly,'" continued Paul, spelling out the last words. "If these boarding school prodigies see a new piece of ribbon on another girl, they cry rapturously 'How sweet!' and when they gaze upon the ocean or Niagara Falls, it's 'How sweet' again. They never say the right thing!"

"Well, what do you want them to say, Mr. Smart?"

"Nothing. But that's an impossibility for a girl!"

"But not for a dead Indian! Paul, did you know that there's an Indian chief buried over on the knob?" said Maud, who always preserved her calm.

"Say, is there? Shades of Hiawatha! Let's go visit him," Paul exclaimed.

"Yes, and you can call out to him:—'Say, Chieftain what are you doing there?' and he will answer—'Nothing!'"

There was a chorus of laughter at Paul's expense, but for once Maud's serenity was upset. Paul chased her around the room until she fell exhausted, when the other girls came to her rescue in a simultaneous onslaught upon the almost victorious lad.

C H A P T E R I I

A HISTORY

THE old shawl had been replaced in the box from whence it had been taken but Millicent's curiosity concerning it refused to be laid as easily. She could not get her thoughts away from it. Day after day she teased her cousin about it, but Asia gave only evasive replies and tried to avoid the subject until one evening when they had gone for a walk, and the younger girl refused to talk of anything else, Asia, worn out of patience exclaimed :

“ Well, I'll tell if you promise not to say a word to your ma or any of the others ! ”

“ I won't ! ”

“ You won't promise ! Then I'll not tell ! ”

“ Oh, Asia, you know I mean I won — promise not to tell ! ”

“ You won't promise not to tell ! ”

“ I promise — promise — promise ! ”

Giggling like school girls and other idiots, as Paul would say, they walked on, for a time incapable of speech.

"Well, go ahead, there's a dear," coaxed Millicent at length, hanging on her cousin's arm.

Asia's countenance assumed a sober cast. She said gravely:

"Have you never heard any remarks about yourself — that you do not resemble any of your family?"

"Often and often! I'm fair and skinny —"

"Say 'lissome' as they do in novels."

"And the rest are dark and fat! But what's that to do with it?"

"Then the other day old Mrs. Gould said to Aunt Kate, 'Why, no one who didn't know the family would ever take Millicent for a child of yours.'"

"Yes — but what's that got to do with the gray shawl?"

"Everything!" returned Asia impressively.

She paused.

"Well, go on!" persisted Millicent.

"Well — the truth is — you are not her child!"

Millicent laughed derisively.

"Get out, you silly!"

"As they never told you, perhaps I'm doing wrong to say anything, but you insisted."

"Go on with your fairy tale!"

"Well, it's something of that kind. You were left at the door one night in the spring all wrapped up in that gray shawl —"

“The — gray — shawl!”

“The folks were all in the sitting room that night for there was a light rain when all at once they heard the gate click. Uncle went out to see who was coming and he almost stumbled over a bundle. He picked it up and felt something squirming. He opened the shawl and there was the tiniest baby about a year old. They all crowded around and made a great fuss but the baby paid no attention, kept laughing up at Uncle, which proved she was a sly little piece, for when some one proposed to send her away to the poor house or the foundlings' home or wherever it was, Uncle wouldn't hear of it and Aunt was just as crazy, so — they took you in!”

“Then I'm a foundling, a charity child!”

“No one knows that — hardly.”

Millicent asked no more questions and Asia rattled on regarding something else, forgetful of the gray shawl. She did not notice her cousin's sudden gravity nor did she suspect the pangs her careless recital had entailed. Millicent's heart was aching but her extreme sensitiveness caused her to hide her suffering from Asia.

The story of the gray shawl impressed her in spite of herself. She tried to become interested in her companion's gay talk but the words “the poor house,” “a foundling,” kept ringing in her ears. She could not shut them away.

Late that night when the rest of the household was sleeping,

Millicent lay awake. She felt so forlorn. The love she had taken as a matter of course from her parents and sisters was only meted out as a sort of charity. She could not recall the slightest difference in their treatment of her unless it might be an overindulgence extended to her as the youngest of the family. How kind they had always been!

"I must try and be extra good to them to make up for it," she mused.

In the days which followed, Millicent found herself almost unconsciously watching her father and mother, comparing their manner to her and the others. She had never been in the least jealous nor had she desired any particular manifestation of their love which she had hitherto accepted as freely as the sunshine and the air, but now every kind word said, each renewed token of love was considered an additional charity. How could they possibly have the same affection for her as for their own children and yet she detected if anything a partiality displayed toward herself. She concluded sadly that this was a proof of their wish to compensate so that she might never be made to feel her true position.

She loved them all so dearly, her heart clung to them more fondly than ever; it was terrible to feel that she had no right to their love! She wished Asia had never told her the history of the gray shawl for she could not forget that she was an alien in the happy

family group; she could not keep from that hateful, spying watch.

Alas, we generally find what we seek! And so it fell out with Millicent in the course of a few days.

It was in June, the weather was not uncomfortably warm; the bushes hung heavy with roses; the windows and doors stood open, breathing in the scented air and giving out another odor which Millicent detected as she came through the gate.

“Cake!” she cried, rapturously sniffing it in.

She hurried around the walk to the back porch and entered the heated kitchen. Mrs. Grove upon seeing her turned hastily and put something away in the cupboard.

“I thought it smelled kind o’ cake-y around here,” observed Millicent.

The lady smiled.

“Perhaps the scent of that jelly roll I baked last Saturday still clings to the kitchen.”

“Not very likely since today’s Wednesday,” thought Millicent.

She felt she was being deceived and she crept sorrowfully away. All that day and the next she received new proofs that she was being kept in the dark.

Upon two occasions her mother was found in conference with the other girls and upon Millicent’s drawing near they would stop suddenly and make some rambling remark.

"She's always putting her neb in where it's not wanted," cried Cora petulantly.

Mrs. Grove smiled.

"Millicent will learn her proper place some day ere long," she remarked.

Millicent smiled bravely, tossed her head and turned away with an unconcerned air, until she was out of sight, then she made a bee line for the attic.

She went to the dingy box, took out the gray shawl and wrapping it around her, sat down on the box. She wrinkled her brow in puzzling meditation.

"What did mamma mean by that? 'Her proper place'—Am I to be made a housemaid here when I'm old enough?" she asked herself.

Certainly it appeared fair enough that she should work and help to pay for what had been expended upon her; but to a little girl who had always considered herself one of the most important members of the family it seemed a cruel fate.

"And all that I really own in the world is this hideous old rag!" she cried, as she dragged from her shoulders the offending article which only a short time before she had called "exquisite" and "interesting."

"How I hate you, I hate you!" she exclaimed, flinging it from her in a sudden rage.

Presently her wrath subsided ; she wiped away her tears, picked up the shawl from the dusty floor and replaced it in the box.

She went down to the dining room where she found the girls taking out the silver ware and the best china preparatory to a cleaning, with Paul swathed in a large kitchen apron as an assistant.

“ What’s all this for ? ” ejaculated Millicent.

“ Little pitchers should be seen and not heard ! ”

“ Little pitchers without a T ? ” inquired Paul.

“ Hand me that salad bowl and be careful — it’s as old — as old ! ”

“ Sure what difference will it make then if I smash it ? I’ll get Aunt Kate a bran’ new one instead with a posy wreath around it ! ” returned Paul, handling the fragile object with a show of carelessness which terrified the girls.

“ A fine butler you would make ! ” said Maud witheringly.

“ Wouldn’t I ? All done up in brass buttons and things ! ”

Paul strutted proudly around the room with the blue apron flapping against his legs. Then he put the precious bowl upside down on his head and taking a corner of the apron in each hand executed a dance.

“ Why is Paul’s head like this salad bowl ? ” demanded Cora as she rescued the latter article.

“ ’Cause it’s empty ! ” came a shrill answering chorus.

Then they turned their energies to the brightening of the silver while Millicent hurried out to the orchard to sit ruminating.

Why had she never noticed it before—the manner in which she was ignored on all occasions? Could it be that it was no new thing, that they had always treated her as one in the way and that she had not noticed it simply because she had not known? These perplexing questions made her head ache.

“Am I the same girl I was a few days ago? No, then I was papa’s and mamma’s little girl and Maud’s and Cora’s sister—now I am nobody in a gray shawl!”

The next day Mrs. Grove had company—an old friend who had arrived for luncheon.

Glancing across the table, she remarked,—

“Kate, who would believe Millicent belonged to this family! Not the faintest resemblance!”

Millicent flushed painfully.

“It’s no crime to be the best looking of the family I hope. If so I’m the guilty one in mine! You girls needn’t look so jealous at me and Millicent, we can’t help it. We were born so and it grows on us!” Paul cried, diverting their attention. Millicent flashed him a comprehending glance, whereupon he continued:

“Maud and Cora are decorated with black eyes, not through

any fault of their own, while Millicent's are like blue stars shining on a misty night."

Paul was a poet; a failing he tried to keep concealed for fear of the girls "giving him the laugh" which they did now, all but Millicent, who felt a sort of satisfaction with her eyes and the boy's appreciation.

"Paul's an old darling!" she declared.

C H A P T E R I I I

A REVERIE

MILLICENT, put on your blue batiste and the wide sash; I want you to take this basket over to Miss Dent's," said Mrs. Grove later in the day.

Millicent hastened to get ready. She thought it strange that no one clamored to accompany her for they all considered it a treat to go to Miss Dent's.

The girls flocked with her to the gate and waved her good-bye.

"As if they were rejoiced to be rid of me," thought Millicent, and when her mother called after her, "Don't hurry back; Paul will go to meet you at seven o'clock," her fears were confirmed.

"That's it — they're going to have company and I would be the one too many!"

Miss Dent lived across the bridge a couple of miles away.

"The walk will do you good, my dear. You are looking pale today," Mrs. Grove had observed kindly.

Millicent would have taken the remark and the commission in good faith a few days earlier but now she was haunted by the conviction that she was being sent out of the way.

It was a small house, that of Miss Dent's, with a big garden at the back in which the children delighted to play; the cosy front room too held many attractions, pretty things, the accumulated treasures of years, strange shells and pearls and corals presented to Miss Dent long years ago by a sailor lover who had gone down with his ship one stormy night.

The girls used to wonder if Miss Dent had forgotten him; she never alluded to her youthful romance, but Millicent learned the truth that day.

The lady found her little friend unusually quiet; nothing seemed to arouse her interest; thinking to amuse her, she displayed a collection of old family portraits, at last she opened a little square velvet-lined case and showed Millicent the daguerreotype of a youth with frank eyes and a bold careless air.

“‘ On a bed of green sea flowers thy limbs shall be laid,
Around thy white bones the red coral shall grow;
Of thy fair yellow locks threads of amber be made,
And every part suit to thy mansion below.

Days, months, years and ages shall circle away,
And still the dark waters above thee shall roll;
Earth loses thine image forever and aye,
Oh, sailor boy, sailor boy, peace to thy soul!”

Millicent quoted these verses which she had found in an old book up in the attic.

She glanced at the gray hair and the wrinkled face of the woman and then back to the picture of the dashing sailor lad; they were surely ill-mated, those two, thought Millicent until she saw the beautiful light in the lady's eyes as she gazed upon the pictured face.

"It is her soul — souls don't grow old," was Millicent's wise conclusion. The aged countenance and the pictured face of the youth no longer seemed incongruous.

Then Miss Dent gave her the accordion to play while she went out to prepare supper.

Millicent played a few tunes on the old-fashioned instrument and as she evoked the strains of "Way Down South in Dixie," she thought of a sunny afternoon in the previous summer when she had heard it played upon a harp, and presently found herself thinking of the little girl in the band who had come along the street with an Italian, a harp, and a monkey.

The man played, the girl danced, and the monkey went among the children, hat in hand. He was a curious little creature in a red cap which he would doff politely. Millicent had been most interested in him; now her thoughts were centered in the girl.

What if she, Millicent, had been adopted by one of these wandering musicians and had gone through the world in her gray silk shawl singing and amusing the other children? To be sure she had no voice for singing but then she could play the accordion.



"It is her soul—souls don't grow old."

She saw herself playing in front of the Groves' house in its frame of green trees and pink June roses with all the children except poor Millicent running to the gate to see what was going on, and then attracted by their joyful shouting a lady and gentleman came out of the house; the lady said it was a pity to see a child so young tramping the dusty highway; the gentleman gave the monkey a gold piece for the little girl, and Paul, who some way happened to be there, said her eyes reminded him of—

“Pumpkin pie, — Millicent,” called Miss Dent cheerily, “I know you’re fond of it!” The dreamer jumped up hastily and followed her hostess into the little apartment which served as a sitting and dining room where a climbing bush heavy with roses of deepest crimson hung in through the window, and a small square table stood in the centre of a rag carpet rug, all bordered around with well-scrubbed pine flooring.

Miss Dent’s treasures in the shape of her best china and delicious preserves, together with the pie, of an artistic golden brown, were the ornamental adjuncts to a toothsome meal which ungrateful Millicent failed to appreciate. Her thoughts bridged the river to her own home where they were all doubtless gathered around the table forgetful of her.

“Why are you so unusually quiet, Millicent? What were you studying so profoundly just now in the parlor?”

"I was thinking—wondering what if I were not Millicent Grove but only a foundling—"

"Nonsense, child, you have been reading some foolish romance," Miss Dent said. Then she changed the conversation, trying to win her guest to a more cheerful frame of mind, which was additional evidence to the latter that Miss Dent, too, knew the mystery of the gray shawl.

"I think I'll go home now," she remarked shortly after lunch and the lady, with gentle tact, did not urge her to remain.

CHAPTER IV

A SURPRISE



MILICENT accomplished the return journey with quick, impatient steps and it was just half past six when she entered the familiar white gate which led to the house. She hurried along the path into the hall and ran lightly up the stairs, unseen by any of the family, whose voices rang merrily through the dining room door, bringing a pang to her heart.

"I'll never be missed," was her sorrowful conviction.

Getting out a few articles of clothing, she wrapped them in the gray shawl which she had brought from the attic and spread out on the floor. Then she wrote a good-bye note to her parents, which although it took a long time proved very unsatisfactory, and another to Asia telling her the *denouement* of the gray shawl's history and for her not to take any blame upon herself as she, Millicent, had insisted upon knowing.

"And oh, Asia, dearest, I feel worse if possible, than if I were going away to boarding school!" which pathetic flight of fancy she knew would harrow the feelings of her cousin.

Then Millicent went around the room taking leave of her pet belongings: — the engraving of an angel guarding a sleeping child which hung on the wall beside her bed, a pretty china vase, a small goblet of thin blue glass, a quaint Japanese box with a key in which were sundry treasures, beads and a ring too small for her wearing — all gifts from friends and schoolmates, and a beloved volume of Miss Alcott's "Eight Cousins" which she had read seven times at least and intended to make it eight, one for each cousin as Paul suggested.

"Of course they belonged to Millicent Grove and I should like to keep some of them but I'll take only what belonged to the foundling, this old shawl," said Millicent heroically as she gathered up the bundle and turned away.

She stood for a moment at the head of the stairs to reconnoiter. No one being visible, she made a rapid descent and crept from the house just as the hall clock pointed to half past seven. She was so absorbed in getting away unobserved that every other feeling was swallowed up.

When she reached the last turn in the road from which the house was visible she stood and waved it good-bye. Her own little window and the two in the attic glowed in the setting sun like tender, watching eyes and she walked backward until their friendly gaze could no longer be seen.

It was necessary to retrace her steps part of the way to Miss Dent's; fearing to meet Paul on his return from there, she climbed the fence in a lonely part of the road and hid in the shade of some bushes.

Soon he came along whistling merrily.

"He expects to find me at home. I've half a notion to call him and say good-bye; I'm sure he wouldn't tell, but then I promised Asia I wouldn't say a word to any one!"

The lad walked briskly down the road past her hiding place, kicking the stones in his path until he was out of sight; when at last even his cheery whistling was no longer heard, Millicent felt strangely alone.

The sun went down behind the hills, but still she crouched in the bushes thinking of the dear ones at home.

She started to her feet and gazed in the direction of the beloved spot which they inhabited.

Would it be better to return?

Involuntarily she stepped forward. Her foot knocked against the bundle which lay on the grass. The sight of the gray shawl brought a sudden revulsion of feeling. She felt that she could not go back, but when she glanced ahead at the long lonely road stretching so far away to the crowded town, a dread of the journey pressed suddenly upon her and she sank to the ground with her face in the dew-wet grass.

* * * * *

All at once she felt two arms around her, kisses on her face and a voice exclaimed:—

“Why, Millie, old girl—I was only joking! I made that all up for fun! You are my own cousin—you are Aunt’s and Uncle’s own little girl!”

“Oh, Asia!” Millicent sat up with a rapturous cry.

“It was mean of me, but goosie,” continued Asia, wiping her cousin’s tear streaked face, “how was I to know you were such a goose! I never thought of it since, and you never said a word! When Paul came in and said you had started home before he reached Miss Dent’s I ran up to your room and found both notes! Here they are!”

“Tear them up, Asia, and don’t tell! But why did you all act so queer and want to get rid of me to-day?”

“No more foolish questions! Come along home and wash your face; I see you have your good duds on!”

They hurried joyously hand in hand, along the road.

“Look, Asia, look! The house is lit up from attic to cellar!” cried Millicent when they came in sight of home, “What’s the matter?”

“There you go again! You ask as many questions as a human child, but I won’t tell you any more fairy stories! Let’s creep in around the back way so no one will see us!”

Upon reaching their room it took only a few minutes to wash their faces and brush their hair.

Then Asia draped the gray silk shawl around her cousin.

"Aunt Kate says her great aunt Millicent, who was quite a belle and married a real live count, owned this shawl; it came with other personal effects after her death from Paris."

"I've often heard of Aunt Millicent. I was named for her!"

"Yes, and Aunt Kate always intended you to have this shawl! She had forgotten all about it until I asked her. But come along!"

As they hurried down the stairs, a crowd of girls and boys in gala attire trooped into the hall.

"Here she comes!" they exclaimed; they seized Millicent and led her into the parlor, which was decked with flowers and brightly illuminated.

Ere she could express her surprise the mingled tones of a harp and violin were heard and the young people started to dance.

"Come with me,—" cried Paul, waltzing the bewildered Millicent across the hall to the dining room.

The table was drawn out to its full length, covered with a beautiful white cloth and glittering with silver and glassware and china. Right in the centre was a lovely big cake upon which gleamed a number of candles.

Almost unconsciously Millicent counted them.

"Why, it's my tenth birthday!" she cried.



CECILIA'S GIFT



HE fairies of the Stream and Hillside held an indignation meeting. It was a bright moonlight night, and therefore they had not lit their gas — (which some folks call the will-o'-the-wisp.) A crowd of them perched aloft on the branches of a blackberry bush, a few walked to and fro on the greensward, while others were seated on a decayed, moss-covered log.

A fairy of unusual size — his weight almost bent the mushroom which served as a speaker's platform — was the first to present his grievance. He was perhaps an inch and a half high, and wore a coat-of-mail made of shining fish scales, with knee-breeches of some purple-colored material, and he carried a fierce-looking sword formed of a fish's fin.

"It is becoming unbearable to have this mortal invade our haunts and make herself so much at home here," he said, brandishing his sword. "Day after day she wades through our waters, disturbing our slumbers; or she sits on the bank, fishing-rod in hand, to catch our fishes with a crooked pin. She is a coward, too, for

the other day I watched the pin and put a crawfish on it and she almost fainted when she drew it up, wriggling, from the water."

"Ha, ha; ho, ho!" some of the listeners cried merrily. "How I should love to have seen her face."

The speaker frowned and took his seat in a huff, while the queen fairy, a slight, graceful being in a robe made of water lilies with a dew-drop crown on her golden tresses, repressed a smile and waved to her subjects to be quiet. She was seated on a mossy throne. Six maids of honor stood on each side, those on the right dressed in pink and the others in blue, while each held a fire-fly in her hand to give the queen light.

"Silence," the queen said, her voice as soft as a gentle breeze, and no sound was heard, although a giddy young fairy almost choked trying to repress her giggling, at which her mamma shook her head warningly.

"How many of you have seen this intruder?"

A thousand voices cried, "I."

"Strange I have not seen her myself," the queen said musingly.
"Prince-of-the-Hawthorn, please describe her appearance."

A little fellow in a green coat, a white vest and red leggings stepped forward, saluted the queen with a low bow and took the platform.

"My sovereign lady," said he in a clear voice, "I have seen

this mortal frequently; she is a small-sized creature about eight years old, her eyes are as blue as Johnny-jump-ups, her cheeks as red as the hawthorn berry and her hair droops like a sunbeam over her shoulders."

A murmur of dissent ran through the crowd and a pert looking fairy in a gorgeous costume made of poppy leaves tossed her head scornfully, crying, "Sunbeams, that tow-headed girl!"

Prince-of-the-Hawthorn looked inquiringly toward the throne.

"Perhaps some one else could give a better description. I only say what I think."

"No, no, you may proceed," the queen answered graciously.

"She seems to be a very kind-hearted little thing; for though she does sometimes catch the minnows, she always takes them gently off the hook and puts them back into the stream."

A mite wearing a white dress and a rainbow hood chimed in, in a piping voice:

"She not only robs the stream, but she takes our flowers, and only the other day when I was reclining beneath a cluster of violets, she threw herself on the ground to read a book and almost crushed the life out of me with her elbow!"

"She did not know you were there," Prince-of-the-Hawthorn said.

"She caught my Royal Butterfly, the one I always travel on,

and brushed some of the gold off his wings," cried one of the queen's pink maids, aggrievedly.

"He is such a great big beauty that I suppose she was only admiring him, and did not know she was injuring his wings. If she wished, she could have taken him away and run a pin through him and kept him to show to her friends."

The pink maiden shed tears at the very idea, whereupon her friends exclaimed, "Prince, how can you!"

"I was only explaining that she is not an ill-meaning mortal. I shall say no more." Whereupon the Prince retired.

A fairy attired in a robe of white and blue stripes took the place vacated.

"I propose that we institute a war against the creature and drive her out of our domain!"

The air rang with cheers, and several fairies stood up and cried, "I second the motion!"

"War, war," was echoed on all sides, while a wee lady in violet turned to fairy Prince-of-the-Hawthorn and whispered sympathizingly, "I am so sorry."

Then the armies were organized, the fairies of the Stream, headed by the big fairy with the coat-of-mail, and the Hillside fairies, led by the fairy dressed in blue and white. All the fairies, young and old, little and big, were enlisted in the good cause, except

a few friends of fairy Prince-of-the-Hawthorn who had nothing to say against the common enemy.

And when little Cecilia, in her blue frock and white apron, and blue gingham sunbonnet, came tripping to her favorite playground the next day with a basket on her arm, in which to carry home some ivy and moss for hanging baskets, and a story book in the basket to read, she was as happy as a lark, all unconscious of the terrible charges that had been brought against her.

She threw the basket on the grass, and, selecting a dry, soft place, sat down in the shade of a willow tree and opened her book, while thousands of her enemies crowded around, eager to see the effect of the first blow directed against her. Of course she could not see them, for it is only when a fairy deigns to bathe a mortal's eyes in dew-cordial that he can do that.

"Buzz! buzz!" a big black and yellow bee, one of the fairies' honey gatherers, who had been hiding in a catnip flower awaiting a signal from them, flew out suddenly and stung poor Cecilia on the hand. The fairies shouted joyously at their success, for the child jumped to her feet, wringing her hand and dancing a regular war dance of agony, while the bee retreated and then advanced, anxious to inflict another sting, but she was too wary to be caught again. She rubbed the place with leaves until the pain subsided, and then proceeded to hunt her ivy and moss.

"Ouch!" she said aloud, a moment later, when a thorn artfully concealed in the leaves ran into her finger. The pink fairy and her companions, who had dragged the thorn there, clapped their hands and smiled teasingly at the sober-faced fairy Prince-of-the-Hawthorn, who disapproved of the whole affair.

In the evening the fairies held a meeting congratulating themselves on the success of their first day's assault and formed plans for the night.

From that day forward, Cecilia met with misfortune every time she went to the woods. One day while crossing the stream a crab fastened himself to her foot. She had removed her shoes and stockings, carrying them in her hand, and down they fell into the water, while she held up her foot and cried in terror at the monster who clung to it. After a vigorous shaking he fell off, and she picked up her shoes and one stocking,—for the other was borne away by the stream,—and hurried to the shore; quite often a thousand-legged worm would fall from the leaves overhead on to her back; if she picked up a honey-pod, it was sure to be worthless, for each night the fairies hunted for the good ones and replaced them with the bad. The ivy with which she often decked her dress and fair hair until she looked like a real wood-goddess, was infested with little green bugs; and when she crossed the stream another day a shining water snake glided beneath her feet. Altogether the



Thousands of her enemies crowded around.

fairies were very troublesome, and Cecilia had never a day of thorough pleasure like those of old.

The fairy Prince-of-the-Hawthorn still protested against this treatment of the little girl who was always kind and gentle and never harmed a living creature.

"That's all very well;" said fairy Poppy-Red, "but you cannot deny that she takes the flowers!"

"No, you can't deny that," the pert pink maid-of-honor added.

"I do not wish to deny it, but what harm can that do? There are thousands of flowers here; we do not need them all, and she often takes them to Hallie Rose, a little blind girl who lives in the town."

"How do you know that?" the queen added, interested.

"From Robin Redbreast, who goes every day to the apple-tree near Mr. Rose's house to sing to Hallie, and he says Cecilia also put a beautiful hanging basket in the window, where Hallie can attend to it."

Afraid that the queen's sympathy would be aroused, Miss Poppy-Red cried: "Well, one thing is certain; I saw her carrying a pigeon away from here a few days ago!"

Fairy Violette, the little friend of Prince-of-the-Hawthorn, who did not often speak in public, said modestly:

"The pigeon's mamma told me that young Sir Pigeon was

hit by a stone and little Cecilia took him home and attended to him tenderly until his wing grew stronger, when she brought him back to the woods. Mrs. Pigeon cannot praise her too highly."

It was plain to be seen that the fairy queen was much impressed by this good report, and no doubt would have declared the war against Cecilia at an end, but the big fairy with the coat-of-mail was of a very revengeful disposition and brought forward many of his friends to speak against her.

"Fairy Smooth Pebble, who lives on the edge of the stream, heard this girl and a companion making arrangements for a picnic to be held on the hillside next week; they will no doubt tread down the grass, steal the flowers, and stir up the mud in the bed of the brook."

"Dreadful! Shame!" were the cries.

The queen, alarmed, consulted as to the best measures to follow to ward off the threatened merrymaking.

The big fairy with the coat-of-mail proposed winning the help of their terrible enemy, King Copperhead, who lived among the bushes far up the hill, but Prince-of-the-Hawthorn entered his protest.

"My gracious lady, please do not forget the nature of this wily creature, King Copperhead. I do not doubt that he will agree to aid you, but you will be in his debt; he is cruel and treacherous;

he may learn many of our secrets, perhaps the one that would give him the power of injuring us."

The poor queen was dazed by the different counsels of her subjects; she was secretly very much afraid of King Copperhead; but many of the fairies, among whom were Fairy Blue-and-White and Miss Poppy-Red, scouted the thought of any danger to the fairy nation from the old king's help.

"Think of the dreadful scare it will give the little girl, she may never recover from it," a tender-hearted creature remarked.

They could not agree upon what to do, for King Copperhead was very much disliked by most of the fairies; they at last decided to hold another meeting beneath the sycamore tree on the bank of the stream the next moonlight night to try and come to an agreement.

But the fairies learned in the interval of a greater danger that threatened them, and the queen called for a meeting to talk it over. All her subjects from far and near were present.

The queen had exchanged her white robes for black ones, and a look of sorrow was on each fairy's face.

"My dear subjects, you know the cause of this meeting full well; old Mr. Moore, the mortal who owns this hill and all the surrounding country, has decided to cut down the trees here for lumber, to dig up the roots and flowers and grass, to fill the bed of the

stream in order to plant corn, and then we will be homeless, and the place we have lived in for hundreds of years will know us no more!"

The queen stopped overcome while cries of lamentation filled the air.

"Where shall we go?" "Alas, alas!" "To think we lived here when no one but the Indians roamed through the land, and now we must leave it."

The big fairy with the coat-of-mail said, "I met old King Copperhead today; he was lurking beneath a blackberry bush, and when he saw me he swung his tail and put out his tongue and cried, 'Good-bye, my friend; give my regards to your queen and all her subjects, and tell them my day has come at last. I shall watch your departure from the top of the hill!' and then he laughed like a demon."

"And to think we intended to ask his help," the queen murmured.

Fairy Prince-of-the-Hawthorn was too polite to say, "I told you so!" though no doubt he felt like so doing.

"We are too much distressed to do more tonight. Please assemble at the big mossy log tomorrow afternoon to make arrangements for going," the queen said brokenly and the crowd slowly and sadly dispersed.

The hour appointed came at last and all the fairies were ready

to greet their queen; their old time enemy, little Cecilia, was there picking flowers, but they did not trouble her now, for their whole attention was given to old Mr. Moore, who crossed the stream and stood looking around him.

"Grandpa," cried Cecilia, as she ran to the old gentleman.

He lifted her up until her face was on a level with his own and kissed her fondly ere putting her down.

"Well, pet, what is the matter now?"

"Don't you know this is my birthday?"

"Why, to be sure it is, and I suppose I must give you a present. What shall it be?"

"Will you give me whatever I ask, certain, sure?"

"If in my power I will, of course."

"Then please give me this part of the woods!"

Mr. Moore looked bewildered, "Hoity, toity! you mean this little hill?"

"Yes, sir; and the stream?"

"Well, well, what good will it be to you? I have just decided to have it cleared for corn-planting."

"That's why I should like to have it; you would spoil my playground, and if I owned it I should let it stay as it is."

"Well, dearie, it is yours; the men shall not disturb it," then Cecilia hugged him and called him the dearest grandpa in the world!

The fairy queen and her subjects heard all this with joy; they declared that Cecilia was the best and kindest mortal that ever breathed. The big fairy with the coat-of-mail, and fairy Prince-of-the-Hawthorn shook hands and were friends ever after; all the fairies filled acorn cups with honey and dew and drank to the health of Cecilia. Prince-of-the-Hawthorn was appointed prime minister to the queen and Fairy Violette as chief maid of honor, her duty being to take care of the queen's crown of dewdrops.

Sometime later old King Copperhead was killed by one of Mr. Moore's men, and the fairies lived in peace and content ever after, while little Cecilia's visits were always welcome to their home on the Stream and Hillside.

L M

THE END.

JUVENILES

BY JEAN K. BAIRD

Danny...

A refreshing tale of life on Goat Hill, a typical Irish washerwoman settlement. Danny, the pride of Mary Shannon's heart, was never known to work. Indeed he was so averse to exertion that he once said: "Oi niver was no hand fur talkin.' Oi don't see no use." A little crippled niece, accustomed to all the luxuries of life, is thrust upon the Shannons, and they call her "Ill Luck." Before the story ends, however, she has become the "Good Luck" of the household.

Cash Three...

Cash Three is a little cash boy in a great department store. He and his father are making a brave fight with poverty, while his aunt is spending thousands of dollars in an effort to locate the little fellow. Cash Three is taken ill, and then his father determines to seek aid of the boy's wealthy relatives. On his way further misfortune overtakes him, but all three— aunt, father and son—spend a delightful Christmas together in her beautiful home.



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